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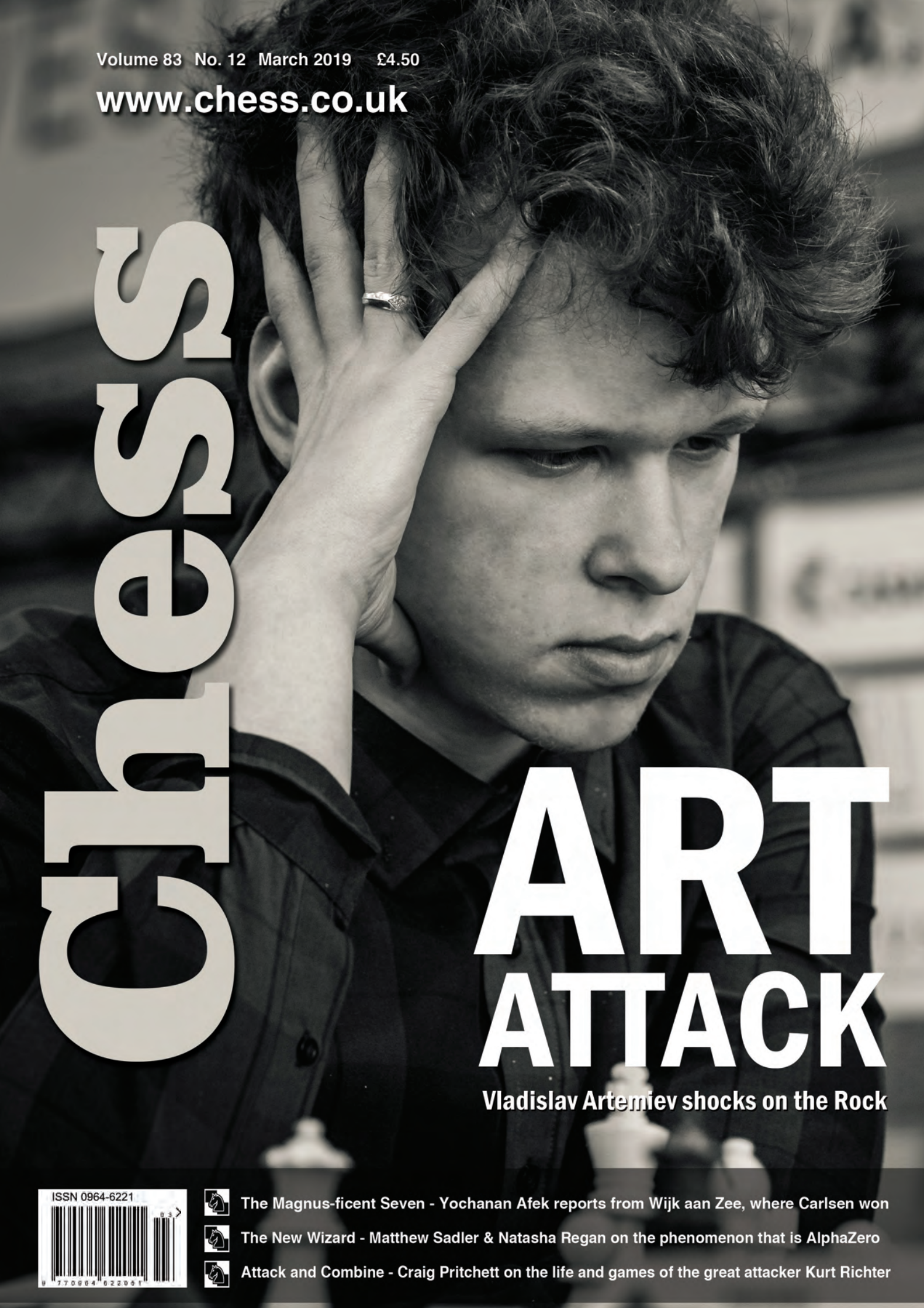


ART ATTACK

Vladislav Artemiev shocks on the Rock

ISSN 0964-6221

The Magnus-ficent Seven - Yochanan Afek reports from Wijk aan Zee, where Carlsen won

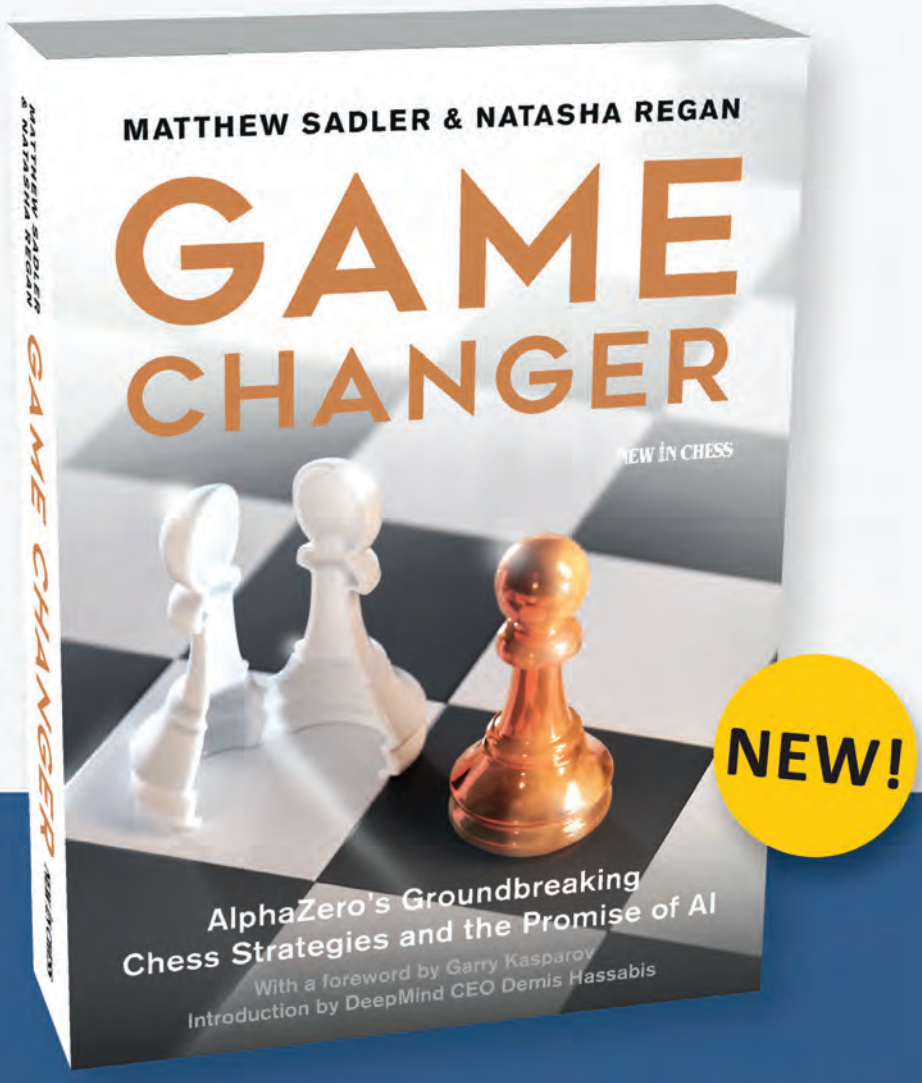
The New Wizard - Matthew Sadler & Natasha Regan on the phenomenon that is AlphaZero

Attack and Combine - Craig Pritchett on the life and games of the great attacker Kurt Richter

VISIT…

"I was thinking at several points during the game*): How would AlphaZero have approached this?"

Magnus Carlsen


MATTHEW SADLER & NATASHA REGAN
GAME CHANGER
NEW IN CHESS
AlphaZero's Groundbreaking Chess Strategies and the Promise of AI
With a foreword by Garry Kasparov
Introduction by DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis
NEW!

"I absolutely love it. A fascinating read: provocative, inspiring, instructive and joyful. AlphaZero's style is great fun." – *GM Daniel King, on his YouTube channel*

"Chess has been shaken to its roots by AlphaZero." – *Garry Kasparov*

"AlphaZero plays in an open, aggressive style and seems to think in terms of strategy rather than tactics, like a human with uncanny vision." – *James Somers, The New Yorker*

"One of the most important chess books ever written." – *GM Raymond Keene, The Spectator*

"Most unnerving was that AlphaZero seemed to express insight. It played like no computer ever has, intuitively and beautifully, with a romantic, attacking style."
Steven Strogatz, New York Times

*) In Round 11 of the 2019 Tata Steel Chess Tournament

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Photo credits: DeepMind (p.33), Maria Emelianova (p.18), Harry Gielen (pp.9-13, 15), Lars OA Hedlund (p.47), Lennart Ootes (pp. 4-6, 30, 50), John Saunders (pp. 7, 26-28, 58), Quality Chess (p.24).

Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein **@TelegraphChess**

Chess will never be the same again. There's been an earthquake and I've felt it. *AlphaZero*, the chess-playing entity that taught itself using deep reinforcement learning algorithms, is now the dominant chess-playing entity.

AlphaZero was given only the basic rules of the game and improved by playing 44 million games in just nine hours against itself, while updating its neural networks with the knowledge learned from experience.

It gives me a lot of pride to say it was a British artificial intelligence company, DeepMind, based in central London, that developed it. DeepMind was co-founded by former chess prodigy Demis Hassabis. Having given up the game for much more important things when he was a teenager, the development of *AlphaZero* has rekindled Demis's love of chess, particularly because it plays so beautifully, so originally and so much more like a human than the software programmes like *Houdini* and *Stockfish* which we are used to.

Writing in the journal *Science*, Garry Kasparov noted: "I admit that I was pleased to see that *AlphaZero* had a dynamic, open style like my own. The conventional wisdom that machines would approach perfection with endless dry maneuvering, usually leading to drawn games. But in my observation, *AlphaZero* prioritizes piece activity over material, preferring positions that to my eye looked risky and aggressive. Programs usually reflect priorities and prejudices of programmers, but because *AlphaZero* programs itself, I would say that its style reflects the truth. This superior understanding allowed it to outclass the world's top traditional program despite calculating far fewer positions per second. It's the embodiment of the cliché, "work smarter, not harder."

It was the phrase 'because AlphaZero programs itself, I would say that its style reflects the truth' that really resonated with me.

Just prior to the London Chess Classic in December, DeepMind released over 200 games of *AlphaZero*. They had been kept under wraps until a peer-reviewed scientific paper was published in the journal *Nature*. *AlphaZero* proved much stronger than the strongest conventional chess engine *Stockfish* which, like its peers, is programmed to evaluate positions according to criteria honed by human programmers.

AlphaZero was a clear winner in two different contests. When the games were played from the starting position, and *AlphaZero* could select its openings, it defeated *Stockfish* +35 =72 -3. In games that started from positions used in computer chess competition (TCEC), the score for *AlphaZero* was: +17 =75 –8. This negates a criticism one often heard in the early days of computer chess that one program had a better opening book that skewed the result.

Back at the 2018 Pro-Biz Cup, hosted by DeepMind and held during the London Chess Classic, Terry Chapman and Garry Kasparov (left) faced off against Matthew Sadler and Demis Hassabis.

As well as playing aggressively, one thing that stood out to me about *AlphaZero* is the high value it attributes to piece mobility and activity over everything else. It pays far less regard to material gain than conventional software programs and sacrifices pawns with abandon. This also seems far more human.

Back in June of last year, Demis Hassabis allowed Dominic Lawson, Chris Flowers and I a sneak preview of *AlphaZero* on condition the games were kept under wraps until the peer-reviewed scientific paper appeared. David Howell acted as our advisor. The games against *AlphaZero* were kindly offered by Demis to the highest bidder at the closing dinner of the 2017 London Chess Classic with the proceeds going to Chess in Schools and Communities.

We played two games against *AlphaZero*. In the first, *AlphaZero* played the Berlin Defence and we went for the dullest, symmetrical line. We were incredibly lucky, as the first 17 moves followed a previous game of David's against Dmitry Andreikin that we had been literally analysing in our heads just before the game. The pre-match plan went something like, "Let's play the Lopez and hope it plays a Berlin Defence", and so it came to pass. David mentioned a line we could play and miraculously it came up.

Both games were played with two hours for us, one hour for *AlphaZero* and a 10-second increment for both sides. It was hugely enjoyable and like all human versus computer games, a slightly strange experience as there is no human player opposite. So we were all pretty nervous, yet excited at what we might see, and it was really strange when we played 1 e4 and *AlphaZero* started to think. David, a real time trouble addict at points in his career, quipped: "This is the first time in my life I've been ahead on the clock!"

Flowers, Howell, Lawson & Pein - *Alpha Zero*
London 2018
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6

AlphaZero had used three minutes already.

3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 ♖e1 ♘d6 6 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 7 ♖xe5+ ♗e7 8 ♗f1 0-0 9 d4 ♗f6 10 ♖e1 ♖e8 11 c3 ♖xe1 12 ♕xe1 ♘e8 13 ♗f4 d5 14 ♗d3 g6 15 ♘d2 ♘g7 16 ♕e2 c6 17 ♖e1

17...♗d7

DeepMind CEO Demis kindly allowed Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan under the bonnet of the fine wizard that is AlphaZero *- see inside..*

Diverging from our pre-game analysis and David's game: 17...♕f8 18 ♘b3 b6 19 ♘d2 ♗d7 20 ♘f3 ♗g4 21 ♕e3 ♗xf3 22 ♕xf3 ♖e8 23 ♖e3 ♖xe3 24 ♗xe3 ♕d8 25 g3 ♗g5 26 h4 ♗xe3 27 ♕xe3 ♕d6 28 ♗f1 ♔f8 29 ♕h6 ♔g8 30 ♗h3 ♘h5 31 ♕e3 ♔f8 32 ♕h6+ ♔g8 33 ♕g5 ♔f8 34 ♕g4 f5 35 ♕g5 ♘f6 36 h5 ♔f7 37 hxg6+ ½-½ Andreikin-Howell, European Club, Novi Sad 2016.

18 ♘f3 ♗g4

This arrived instantly.

19 h3 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 By now we were down to 1 hour, 38 against 42 minutes.

20...♕b6 21 ♗h6

21 ♗c7 ♕xc7 22 ♕xf6 ♖e8 leads nowhere.

21...♖e8 22 ♖xe8+

Solid was our plan, but 22 ♖e3!? ♖xe3 23 fxe3 was also possible.

22...♘xe8 23 ♕e2 ♕d8 24 g3 ♕e7 25 ♔g2 ♕xe2 26 ♗xe2 ♗e7 27 ♗d3 ♘g7

There wasn't too much debate about whether to take on g7 and reach a dead drawn opposite-coloured bishop endgame.

28 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 29 f4 ♔f6 30 ♔f3 ♔e6 31 ♔e3 ♗d8 32 ♔f3 b5 33 ♗c2 ♗a5 34 ♔e3 ♗b6 35 a4 bxa4 36 ♗xa4 c5 37 dxc5 ½-½

In the return we were not so lucky.

AlphaZero - Flowers, Howell, Lawson & Pein

London 2018

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♗e3 c5 7 d5 e6

7...b5!? did not feel right against a computer. Afterwards I noted that 8 cxb5 a6 9 a4 ♕a5 10 ♕d2 axb5 seems decent, although now 9 ♗d2 looks better.

8 ♘f3 exd5 9 cxd5

9...b5?

Oh dear, this was my idea. I had seen that we would secure the exchange of knight for *AlphaZero*'s dark-squared bishop and secure some control of dark squares. In my experience this is often worth a pawn, but *AlphaZero* demonstrates it is of no value whatsoever.

9...♗g4 was sounder, not 9...♘g4 10 ♗f4 ♕b6 11 ♕b3. Here d6 is exposed and when Black has to play ...♘e5, White takes the knight, which leaves Black with a poor structure.

10 e5!

10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♕d2 ♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕xb2 is OK for Black.

10...dxe5 11 ♗xc5 ♖e8 12 ♗xb5 ♘bd7 13 ♗e3 ♘g4 14 0-0!

14 ♗g5 ♕b6 15 0-0 e4 16 ♕e2 ♗a6 17 ♗xa6 exf3 18 ♕xf3 ♘xh2! was my idea, and if 19 ♔xh2 ♕xa6. Even this isn't especially good for Black, but seemed like a decent idea at the time.

14...♘xe3 15 fxe3 ♕b6

None of us had seen what was coming.

16 ♔h1!! ♕xe3 17 d6 e4 18 ♘d5 ♕c5 19 ♘c7 ♖f8?!

Dominic Lawson proposed the supremely insouciant 19...♗xb2, ignoring the hanging rooks. We hadn't seen 20 ♘xe8 ♕xb5 21 ♘c7 ♕c5 22 ♘g5!! which seems to be the refutation, although after 22...♕xg5 23 ♕b3! ♗f6 (if 23...♘e5 24 ♕xb2) 24 ♘xa8 ♗a6 25 ♘c7 ♗xf1 26 ♖xf1 e3 27 ♖e1 ♗e5 28 ♕xe3 ♕h4 29 g3 ♕b4 Black can struggle on.

20 ♖c1 ♕h5 21 ♘d4 ♕xd1 22 ♖fxd1 ♗xd4 Not 22...♖b8 23 ♘c6.

23 ♘xa8

23...♗e3

Again, 23...♗xb2! was better, and if 24 ♖c2 ♗a3 or ...♗e5, or if 24 ♖c7 ♘f6. Now we are the exchange down for no compensation and *AlphaZero* wrapped up the game, although not always in the way we were expecting.

24 ♖c3 ♗f4 25 ♘c7 ♗e5 26 ♖c4 ♖d8 27 ♖xe4 ♗b7 28 ♖e2 ♗f4 29 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 30 ♖e7 ♖xd6 31 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 32 ♖d7 ♗c5 33 ♘e6 ♗xg2+ 34 ♔xg2 fxe6 35 ♔f1 e5 36 ♔e2 ♗d4 37 b4 h5 38 a4 g5 39 ♔f1 g4 40 ♔g2 h4 1-0

I'm in the middle of reading *Game Changer*, the new book by Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan. It's all about the creation and playing style of *AlphaZero*, as well as its thought processes. The authors have selected some stunning examples of *AlphaZero*'s play and discuss what it can teach us.

Game Changer is a wonderful read and I can thoroughly recommend it already. It includes a foreword by Garry Kasparov and an introduction by Demis who makes the following point: "At DeepMind we believe one of the keys to AI is the notion of generality, whereby a single system is able to perform well across a wide variety of tasks, much like the brain."

This is the great hope. By using games as the test bed, and they are perfect for it as the results are clearly measurable, DeepMind hope to be able to employ the reinforced learning techniques in wider areas. *AlphaZero* is the logical development from *AlphaGo* which has revolutionised the ancient Japanese game and defeated Lee Sedol back in 2016.

There is also a lovely chapter consisting of

an interview with Demis and then a discussion of how *AlphaZero* thinks. This is particularly fascinating as Matthew and Natasha were let 'under the bonnet' and examine *AlphaZero*'s thought processes in some of its most beautiful games.

I think every chess player should have this book, so I won't reveal too much but this game, with five pawn sacrifices, illustrates many aspects of *AlphaZero*'s style and is analysed in depth. For a small preview and more from Matthew and Natasha do see pages 32-33 of this issue.

AlphaZero-Stockfish
London 2018
English Opening

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2 0–0 5 a3 ♗xc3 6 ♕xc3 a5 7 b4 d6 8 e3 ♘e4 9 ♕c2 ♘g5 10 b5 ♘xf3+ 11 gxf3 ♕f6 12 d4 ♕xf3 13 ♖g1 ♘d7 14 ♗e2 ♕f6 15 ♗b2 ♕h4 16 ♖g4 ♕xh2 17 ♖g3 f5 18 0-0-0 ♖f7 19 ♗f3 ♕h4 20 ♖h1 ♕f6 21 ♔b1 g6 22 ♖gg1 a4 23 ♔a1 ♖g7 24 e4 f4 25 c5 ♕e7 26 ♖c1

AlphaZero is playing on the kingside, the queenside and in the centre!

26...♘f6 27 e5 dxe5 28 ♖he1 e4 29 ♗xe4 ♕f8 30 d5 exd5 31 ♗d3 ♗g4 32 f3 ♗d7 33 ♕c3 ♘h5 34 ♖e5 c6 35 ♖ce1

Black is three pawns up, but White's co-ordination and bishops are a sight to behold.

35...♘f6 36 ♕d4 cxb5 37 ♗b1 ♗c6 38 ♖e6 ♖f7 39 ♖g1 ♕g7 40 ♕xf4 ♖e8 41 ♖d6 ♘d7 42 ♕c1 ♖f6 43 f4 ♕e7 44 ♖xf6 ♘xf6 45 f5 ♕e3 46 fxg6 ♕xc1 47 gxh7+ ♔f7 48 ♖xc1 ♘xh7 49 ♗xh7 ♖e3 50 ♖d1 ♔e8 51 ♔a2 ♗d7 52 ♗d4 ♖h3 53 ♗c2 ♗e6 54 ♖e1 ♔d7 55 ♔b2 ♖f3 56 ♖e5 ♖g3 57 ♖e3 ♖g2 58 ♔c3 ♖g4 59 ♖f3 ♔e8 60 ♖f2 ♖g3+ 61 ♔b4 ♖g4 62 ♖d2 ♗d7 63 ♔a5 ♖f4 64 ♗e5 ♖f3 65 ♖d3 ♖f2 66 ♗d1 ♗c6 67 ♔b6 1-0

Vladimir Kramnik strived typically hard to win his final three games at Wijk aan Zee, but came up just short, then retired. We have a further tribute to the 14th world champion inside this issue.

Vlad all Over

It seemed inevitable, yet it's still saddening to report that Vladimir Kramnik has decided not to play at the top level anymore. The 14th world champion made this announcement after a chastening experience at Wijk aan Zee – see inside. In recent years Kramnik played some wonderful games as he changed his playing style to become more risk-taking, almost cavalier in fashion. Yet it's been producing indifferent results.

It seems that Kramnik can no longer motivate himself to do the huge amount of work required to play the big events and so henceforth he may restrict himself to some rapid chess and exhibitions. His contribution to chess development and popularisation has been immense. Quite simply he is one of the greatest ambassadors for the game we have.

The only possible upside of his retirement is we will hopefully see him in the commentary room more often. As we know from the London Chess Classic, Vlad is just brilliant at explaining games with the utmost clarity, in terms lesser players can understand. I look forward to a new best games collection and some insights into how he toppled Garry Kasparov back in 2000.

Perhaps Vlad is also a candidate for FIDE President at some time in the future – he has the stature. He may have to revisit his relationship with the Russian Chess Federation as their Chairman Andrei Filatov said just a few days ago that he hoped Kramnik would play the Russian Super-Final this year and even the Chess Olympiad at Khanty-Mansiysk in 2020, which is not at all what I think Vlad has in mind.

England at the World Teams

Following the tremendous result at the Batumi Olympiad, where England came fifth, we have been invited to the World Team Championships at Astana in Kazakhstan, which begins a few days after UK readers receive the magazine. This is the first time we have qualified since 1997. The 10 places are offered to the defending champions, the four continental champions, the hosts, a wildcard place and the top three placers at the preceding Olympiad not already qualified.

Ordinarily, it would not have been possible for the ECF to support our participation. My budget as ECF Director for International Chess only allows for one representative team tournament per year and funds are already earmarked for the European Team Championship in October. Thanks to support from the Scheinberg family, who are great supporters of chess on the Isle of Man, we can field a strong team of: Mickey Adams, Luke McShane, Gawain Jones and David Howell, with Jon Speelman as analyst and reserve. I will captain the team, as John Nunn is unavailable, which is a shame, as he was tremendous at Batumi.

The line-up for the tournament is: China, Azerbaijan, Iran, USA, Egypt, Russia, Poland, England, Kazakhstan and India, while the line-up for the Women's World Team Championship is: Russia, China, USA, Egypt, Ukraine, Georgia, Hungary, Armenia, Kazakhstan and India. A full report next time.

60 Seconds with...

Vladislav Artemiev

Photo: John Saunders

Born: 5th March 1998 in the Siberian city of Omsk.

Place of residence: I still live in Russia, but now in Kazan.

Occupation: I am in my third year studying at the Volga River Sport Academy of Physical Culture and Tourism.

Enjoyable? I like to meet up with my friends, when I have free time after tournaments and am not studying.

And home life? Very good. At the end of last year I married my lovely girlfriend and we are now awaiting our first child.

But sometimes good to escape to: Being a chess player is not an easy life, involving much travel and preparation, so I spend any free time at home.

Sports played or followed: I'm not such a bad table-tennis player and also enjoy football and skiing. My hobby, though, is following boxing and learning about its greats.

A favourite novel? Probably *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, although I also enjoy Arthur Conan Doyle and Jack London**.**

Piece of music? When in a good mood I like Russian pop music, at other times classical music and never heavy rock.

Film or TV series? I like comedies. The last film I saw was *Green Book*, which was fantastic.

What's the best thing about playing chess? It's the process of a fight; two people, two minds, and only one can win.

And the worst? The always slow evening after losing a game when you can't wait for the day to end.

Your best move? My funniest and most memorable move was against Ildar Khairullin. I had offered a trade of rooks on the c-file and then switched my rook back to... a8!

I.Khairullin-V.Artemiev
Russian Championship, Chita 2015

20...♖a8!? 21 ♗d3 ♘e8 22 ♕d1 ♘d6 23 b3 ♘d7 24 ♘c3 ♗f6 25 ♘a4 e5 26 ♗b4 ♘b6 27 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 28 ♗c5 ♕d8 29 dxe5 ♗xe5 30 ♗e2 ♘e8 31 ♕d2 ♘c7 32 f4 gxf4 33 exf4 ♗d6 34 ♗f2 ♘e6 35 ♕xd5 ♘xf4 36 ♕f3 ♕g5 37 ♖c4 ♖e8 38 ♖e4 ♖c8 39 ♖c4 ♖f8 40 ♗g3 ♗c5+ 41 ♔h1 ♘xe2 42 ♕xe2 ♖d8 43 ♕f3 ♖d2 44 ♕f5 ♖d1+ 45 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 46 ♔h3 ♕h6+ 47 ♔g2? ♖g1+ 0-1

But less memorable than your worst move? I don't like to remember my defeats, but am still haunted by my blunder against Andrey Baryshpolets.

V.Artemiev-A.Baryshpolets
Baku 2014

35 ♖f3?? ♖xe5 36 ♖g3 ♕h6 37 ♖f1 ♖ef5 38 c4 ♖xf4 39 ♖gf3 ♗g5 40 ♕e2 ♖xf3 41 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 0-1

And a highly memorable opponent? Of course it has to be Magnus Carlsen followed by Hikaru Nakamura, a real chess fighter and ambitious player.

Favourite game of all time? Ljubojevic-Karpov, Linares 1981. Karpov won a fine technical game with the Caro-Kann in a manner which always resonates with me.

The best three chess books: Anything on the endgame by Dvoretsky has to be up there. *744 games of Bobby Fischer* too, where we have the chance to see the games played by one of the all-time greats. I can also highly recommend Karpov's *My 300 Best Games*.

Is FIDE doing a good job? As I understand things, FIDE now has an excellent chance to be financially stable under Arkady Dvorkovich. He communicates well, is a decent player and loves chess, so I look forward to the future of chess with some optimism.

Or your National Federation? The Russian Chess Federation has done well in the last three or four years. We have the super-strong Aeroflot Open, and the programme 'chess in schools' continues to evolve.

Any advice? Don't forget chess is an art.

A tip please for the club player: If you want to progress in chess you must work on your calculation. It's also very important to study endgames, such as with the books of Dvoretsky and Shereshevsky. And, of course, love chess!

The Magnus-ficent SEVENTH

Magnus Carlsen scored a record seventh victory at Wijk aan Zee, watched by Yochanan Afek, who also saw Vladimir Kramnik in action for the final time

The tiny Dutch coastal town of Wijk aan Zee hosted the 81st edition of the world's most famous tournament. Some 2,000 amateurs competed in the traditional groups of four and ten players under one roof at the main venue, De Moriaan, alongside the two crown grandmaster groups: the Masters and the Challengers.

Hundreds more chess enthusiasts arrived from all over the Netherlands to watch their heroes and attend the daily commentary sessions presented by veteran Dutch grandmasters and masters in café De Zon, while the world-wide chess community followed the games and commentary transmitted live online. Two rounds of the Masters again went on tour, following a recent and successful tradition, this time to Alkmaar and Leiden.

The long tradition of the Tata Steel tournament dates back to 1938 when it began with the Dutch minimal format of four-player groups ('vierkamp'). It has maintained its continuity throughout eight decades, with the exception of just one year, 1945, the one that ended World War II. The current name of the event, just like its former guises of Hoogovens and Corus, is in accordance with the history of the region's steel industry, the main sponsor of the tournament.

The Masters

The Masters was a Category 21 super-tournament with an average rating of 2753. The line-up of the world's elite players was led, as usual in the last decade, by world champion Magnus Carlsen. Two former world champions, Vladimir Kramnik and Vishy Anand, were among the participants, while the host country was represented by its no.1 Anish Giri and its most promising young grandmaster, the 20-year-old Jorden van Foreest, who made his debut in the top group. Another debutant was the winner of last year Challengers, the Indian GM Vidit Santosh Gujrathi.

In his 15th consecutive appearance, Carlsen was after nothing less than extending his record of tournament victories at Wijk aan Zee. Two years ago he already won the Masters for the fifth time, thereby equalling Anand's all-time record of five wins. Magnus's victory last year created a new record of six wins, so it was natural that nothing less than increasing this record would make him happy.

The opening rounds were, however, not easy for Carlsen, who began with a hard-fought battle.

Ding Liren-M.Carlsen
Round 1
Romanishin System

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 b5 3 d4 e6 4 ♗g5 c5 5 d5 ♕a5+ 6 ♗d2 ♕b6 7 dxe6 fxe6 8 a4 b4 9 a5 ♕d8

Also playable is 9...♕d6 10 ♗g2 ♘c6 11 c4 ♗e7.

10 ♗g2 ♘c6 11 ♘e5

11...♘xe5!?

This positional exchange sacrifice looks like the best way to avoid serious damage to Black's pawn structure. Nevertheless, there was another option: 11...♕c7!? 12 ♘xc6 ♗b7 13 ♗f4 d6, which equalises with no material concessions.

12 ♗xa8 d5

Blocking the bishop from returning to its base has a double purpose: to considerably weaken the light squares in White's kingside, as well as to keep generating threats to trap the bishop.

13 a6 ♗d7 14 ♗b7 ♗d6 15 ♗g5 ♘f7 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♘d2 0-0 18 0-0

Both sides finally find time to move their kings to safety. White decides to give away the attacked pawn in view of 18 b3 ♘g5 19 0-0 ♘h3+ 20 ♔g2 ♘f4+! 21 ♔h1 ♗b5 when Black would seize the initiative.

18...♕xb2 19 e4 ♕d4!?

19...♗b5 20 exd5 ♗xf1 21 ♘xf1 e5 was a solid path to material equality.

20 exd5 e5 21 ♘b3 ♕e4 22 ♕d3 ♕g4 23 f3 ♕h5 24 ♘d2 ♘g5 25 ♗c6 ♗h3 26 ♗b5

Naturally, not 26 ♖f2? ♗f5 27 ♕e3 ♘h3+ 28 ♔g2 ♘xf2 29 ♕xf2 e4 when Black would win.

26...♗xf1 27 ♖xf1

27...♖xf3!

The most straightforward route to equality.

28 ♘xf3 e4 29 ♕e3 ♘xf3+ 30 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 31 ♕xf3 exf3 32 ♔f2 ½-½

In this opposite-coloured bishop ending nothing is left to play for.

* * * * * * *

After four rounds Carlsen had actually created a new and unplanned record: 21 consecutive draws in classical games, including a certain 12 with Caruana. In doing so the world champion erased the previous record of Anish Giri's 20 undecided games in a row. At that stage the early leader of the Masters was the Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi with 3/4, including two important victories, against Giri and Kramnik.

Following a typically slow start, Magnus then seemed to switch gear as he reeled off a string of wins.

M.Carlsen-R.Rapport
Round 8
Sicilian Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 ♕c7 6 g3

Such modest aspirations in the opening, avoiding the sharp main lines, are characteristic of the world champion's style, especially when meeting an opponent with such an attacking style as the Hungarian no.1.

6...a6 7 ♗g2 ♘f6 8 0-0 d6 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♘a4 ♖b8 11 c4 c5 12 b3 ♗e7 13 ♗b2 0–0 14 ♕e1 ♘d7 15 ♖d1 ♗b7 16 ♕c3 ♗f6 17 ♕d2 ♗e7 18 ♕c3 ♗f6 19 ♕d2 ♗e7

The normal practice of repeating moves just twice in order to test the opponent's intention, as well as saving some precious time for the more critical stages of the battle.

20 f4! e5 21 ♗c3 ♗c6 22 ♗a5 ♕b7 23 ♘c3 exf4 24 gxf4 ♖fe8 25 e5!

Magnus is ready for multiple exchanges in order to secure a stronghold in the centre for his knight.

25...♗xg2 26 ♕xg2 dxe5 27 ♘d5! e4

27...exf4 is met by 28 ♖fe1! ♔f8 29 ♗c7! ♖bc8 30 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 31 ♗d6, winning.

28 ♗c3 f6 29 ♔h1 ♔h8 30 ♖g1 ♗f8

31 ♘e3!?

White hesitates to trade his proud knight, but 31 ♘xf6!? ♘xf6 32 ♗xf6 ♖e6 33 ♗e5 ♖be8 34 ♖d5 looks like an adequate alternative to continue White's fine strategic play. Magnus was apparently looking for more than that.

31...♕c6 32 ♖d5 ♕e6 33 ♖h5 ♕f7 34 ♕h3 g6

34...h6 35 ♘f5 ♖b6 allows 36 ♖xg7! (36 ♘h4 appears promising too) 36...♗xg7 37 ♘xh6 ♕f8 38 ♘f5+ ♔g8 39 ♕g4 ♘e5 40 fxe5 fxe5 41 ♖g5 ♖b7 42 ♕xe4 when the h-pawn is ready to start marching.

35 ♖h4 ♖b6?

Allowing a forced win, although there is no escape for Black anymore.

36 f5 ♘e5 37 ♘d5 ♖d6 38 fxg6 ♘xg6

39 ♗xf6+

39 ♘xf6 also works.

39...♖xf6 40 ♖xh7+! 1-0

Black loses both his rooks.

The ever highly creative Richard Rapport was outplayed by Carlsen, but did defeat both Duda and van Foreest, as we'll see.

After eight rounds an old acquaintance joined Magnus in the lead on 5½ points. It was none other than the senior in the group, Vishy Anand. The former world champion had just beaten the two most disappointing players in this year's Masters, Vladimir Kramnik and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

V.Anand-S.Mamedyarov
Round 8
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 dxc5 e6 5 ♘f3 ♗xc5 6 a3 ♘e7 7 ♗d3 ♘g6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘bd2 ♘c6 10 b4 ♗b6 11 ♗xg6

A possible alternative is 11 ♗b2 ♘f4 12 ♘b3 a5 13 b5 a4! with equality.

11...fxg6

We are normally advised to recapture towards the centre to avoid creating further pawn islands, but opening up a file to allow considerable counterplay is a significant factor in this position.

12 ♘b3 ♗d7 13 ♖e1 a5 14 b5 ♘e7 15 a4 ♖c8 16 ♗e3 ♗xe3 17 ♖xe3 ♘f5 18 ♖d3 g5 19 h3!

Threatening 20 ♕d2 to fork pawns on both wings, although that isn't the only threat...

19...b6?

The Azeri GM ignores the main danger. Instead, 19...♕c7 20 ♖c1 ♕c4 would have supplied decent counterplay.

20 c4!

Storming the barricades along the semi-open central file to lure the black rook into the firing line.

20...♖xc4 21 ♖xd5! ♖f7

21...exd5 22 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 23 ♕xc4 leaves White a gigantic passed pawn ahead.

22 ♖d3 g4?! 23 ♘fd2

Grabbing a pawn, although 23 ♘bd2! ♖b4 24 hxg4 ♖xg4 25 ♖c1 ♘e7 26 ♘c4 ♘d5 27 ♘d6 ♖e7 (27...♖ff4 28 ♖xd5! wins) 28 ♖d4! seems more active and clearly favours White.

23...♖b4 24 hxg4 ♘e7 25 ♘f3

Following 25 ♘c4! ♘g6 26 ♘bd2 ♕e7 27 g3 White neutralises Black's counterplay.

25...♘d5 26 ♘bd4 ♖f4?

The decisive error, although in any event White is evidently better owing to the extra pawn and his superior set-up following 27 ♖c1.

27 ♘c2! ♖be4 28 ♖xd5! exd5 29 ♕xd5+ 1-0

29...♔f8 30 ♖d1 is hopeless for Black.

Both Carlsen and Anand drew their ninth round games, allowing Nepomniachtchi to join them in the lead by beating Vidit. The tenth round Carlsen-Anand encounter was Vishy's big chance to have a serious go at equalising the overall record of tournament victories at Wijk. However, the game developed in a scenario typical of the current world champion: multiple exchanges in the opening followed by a long and lasting advantage in a rook and knight endgame. After a couple of inaccuracies by Anand, Carlsen managed to grab a pawn and exchange rooks to reach the position below.

M.Carlsen-V.Anand
Round 10

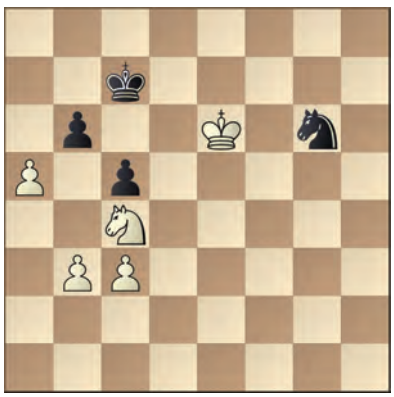
57 ♘f4+! ♔d6

57...♔e5 is met by 58 ♔c4! when 58...♔xf4 obviously fails to 59 ♔b5 ♘e7 60 ♔xb6 with a hopeless chase for Black after the a-pawn.

58 ♔c4 ♘a7 59 ♘d5 ♔c6 60 ♘e7+ ♔d6 61 ♘f5+ ♔c6 62 ♔d3 ♔c7

Why not accelerate liquidation with 62...b5?

63 ♔e4 ♘c6 64 ♘e3 ♔d6 65 ♘c4+ ♔c7 66 c3 ♘e7 67 ♔e5 ♘g6+ 68 ♔f5 ♘e7+ 69 ♔e6 ♘g6 70 a5!



70...b5??

The losing move. The common rule is to minimise the material in inferior endings and this one is no exception. Correct was 70...bxa5 71 ♔d5 ♘f4+ 72 ♔xc5 ♘e2 73 ♘d6! ♘c1! (73...♘xc3 74 ♘b5+ ♘xb5 75 ♔xb5 a4 76 ♔xa4 ♔b6 77 ♔b4! wins) 74 ♘b5+ ♔b7 75 ♘d4 ♔a6 76 ♔c4 ♔b6 when Black should draw.

71 ♘e3

Even stronger would have 71 ♘d6! b4 (or if 71...♔c6 72 a6 ♔b6 73 ♘xb5 ♔xa6 74 ♘c7+ ♔b7 75 ♔d6 c4 76 bxc4) 72 c4 ♔c6 73 a6 ♔b6 74 ♘e4 ♘f4+ 75 ♔d6 ♘d3 76 ♔d5 ♘f4+ 77 ♔e5, winning.

71...♘f4+ 72 ♔e5 ♘e2 73 ♘d5+ ♔c6 74 b4 ♘xc3

74...cxb4 75 cxb4 ♘c1 76 ♘e7+ ♔b7 77 ♔d4! ♘b3+ 78 ♔c3 ♘c1 79 ♘d5 ♘e2+ 80 ♔d3 ♘g3 81 ♔d4 also wins.

75 ♘xc3 cxb4 76 ♘e2! 1-0

The threat of Anand to equalise the all-time record thus seemed to have been foiled and even Nepomniachtchi remained behind Carlsen after being surprised in round 10 by a young Dutchman who had finally found his stride.

Belying his age, Vishy Anand was very much in overall contention until he collapsed under typical pressure from Carlsen in the tenth round. Not all knight endgames are drawn!

J.Van Foreest-I.Nepomniachtchi
Round 10
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 h3 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e6 8 f4 exf4 9 ♗xf4 ♘c6 10 ♕e2 ♗e7 11 0-0-0 ♕c7 12 g4 0-0 13 g5 ♘d7 14 ♕e3 ♖ac8 15 ♔b1 ♖fe8 16 h4 b5 17 ♕g3

17 ♘d5?! is pointless in view of 17...♗xd5 18 exd5? ♗xg5.

17...♘ce5 18 ♘d4 ♘b6 19 ♗h3 ♗xh3 20 ♕xh3 ♘ec4 21 ♘d5 ♘xd5 22 exd5 ♘b6 23 ♗c1 ♘xd5 24 h5 ♗f8 25 g6 h6 26 ♕g2 ♘f6

Correct was to get rid of the bishop with 26...♘e3 27 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 28 ♘f5 ♖e6 29 gxf7+ ♕xf7 30 ♖df1 ♕d7, when Black should be fine.

27 ♗xh6! fxg6

27...gxh6 28 gxf7+ ♔h8 29 fxe8♕ ♖xe8 30 ♖hg1 wins.

28 ♖df1 ♕c4 29 ♖xf6! ♕xd4 30 ♖xg6 ♔h7 31 ♗c1! ♕e4

32 h6!

The blows keep raining down on Black.

32...♕xg6 33 hxg7+ ♔xg7 34 ♗h6+ ♔f7 35 ♖f1+ ♕f6 36 ♕d5+! ♔e7

36...♖e6 is met by 37 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 38 ♗g5+ ♔f7 39 ♕f5+ and wins.

37 ♗g5 A fatal pin, after which matters are just a matter of technique.

37...♕xg5 38 ♖f7+ ♔d8 39 ♕xg5+ ♗e7 40 ♕d5 ♖g8 41 a3 ♖g1+ 42 ♔a2 ♖e1 43 ♕b7 ♖xc2 44 ♖h7 ♖c7 45 ♕xa6 ♖e5 46 ♖h8+ ♔d7 47 ♕a8 ♗f6 48 ♖f8 ♗g7 49 ♖d8+ ♔e7 50 ♕b8 ♖ec5 51 ♖g8 ♔e6 52 ♕e8+ ♔d5 53 ♕e2 ♗e5 54 ♖b8 ♔c6 55 ♕e4+ ♔d7 56 ♕d3 ♔c6 57 ♕f3+ d5 58 ♕h5 d4 59 ♕g6+ ♗d6 60 ♕e4+ 1-0

Black finally decided that he had seen enough, in view of 60...♖d5 (if 60...♔d7 61 ♕e8#) 61 ♖xb5!, etc.

Towards the 'money time', the decisive stage of the tournament, a new player joined the race for the top honours. Anish Giri had an unusual run prior to round 11. His only defeat in the entire event was in the first round, as white, at the hands of Nepomniachtchi. In the following rounds he scored four wins – all of them as Black. Giri's victims were Kramnik, Rapport, Duda and Fedoseev. In round 11 he met the American Champion.

A.Giri-S.Shankland
Round 11

38 ♔f6

Black is about to lose his kingside pawns. Is there any hope left?

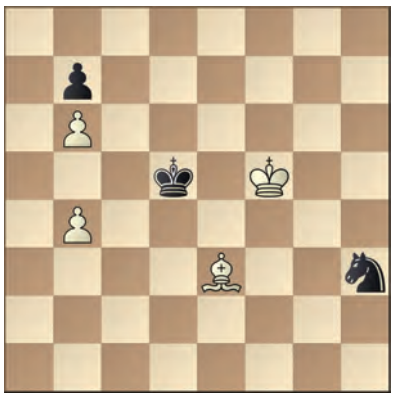
38...♔d7 39 ♗f8 ♘h4 40 ♗xh6 ♘f3!

Black approaches the trap and enters the cage deliberately.

41 h3 ♘g1! 42 ♗xg5 ♘xh3 43 ♗e3

This is what White was hoping for. The knight is dominated, so is it game over?

43...♔d6 44 ♔f5 ♔d5 45 b6 1-0



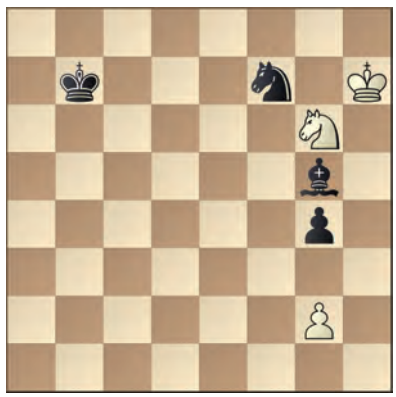
So far it has appeared like Black knew perfectly well what he was doing and now, to the astonishment of all, he decided to call it a day. Shankland resigned as his knight is lost, not realising ('forgetting' the Russians often call it) that the resulting position is in fact a positional draw. Following, for example, 45...♔d6 46 ♔g4 ♔d7 47 ♔xh3 ♔c8 48 ♗f4 ♔d7 49 ♔g4 ♔c8 50 ♔f5 ♔d7 51 ♔f6 ♔c8 the game has reached a well-known fortress position where even if the black king is unable to reach the very corner it still cannot be smoked out of the eighth rank owing to stalemate.

An unfortunate accident, indeed, although the American impressively managed to recover from this shocking event in next to no time and win his last two games.

Shankland's missed fortress has been demonstrated in various endgame studies. Your author's favourite is a prize-winner by the Russian Grandmaster Yuri Bazlov. White pins his hopes on the ability of his king to reach the promised land of f1 after forcing knight exchanges.

Sam Shankland is going to struggle to live down his decision to resign a drawn position against Anish Giri. To his credit, he immediately bounced back, defeating Nepo and Kramnik.

Yuri Bazlov
5th Pr. Nunn-50 JT , 2005



White to play and draw

1 ♘h8!

This funny-looking knight jump to the opposite corner is the only way: 1 ♔g7? fails to 1...♘d6 2 ♘e5 g3 3 ♔g6 ♗d8! 4 ♔h5 ♘e4 5 ♔g4 ♗c7 6 ♔f3 ♘d2+ 7 ♔e3 (or 7 ♔e2 ♘b3 8 ♘g6 ♔c6 9 ♔f3 ♘d4+ 10 ♔g4 ♔d5 11 ♘f4+ ♔e4) 7...♘f1+ 8 ♔e2 ♘h2 9 ♘d3 ♔c6 10 ♔e3 ♔d5 11 ♘b4+ ♔e5 12 ♘c6+ ♔f5 13 ♘d4+ ♔g4 14 ♘c2 ♗b6+ 15 ♔e2 ♔f4 and wins.

1...♘e5

Following 1...♘xh8 2 ♔xh8 ♔c6 3 ♔g7 ♔d5 4 ♔g6 ♗e3 5 ♔f5 g3 6 ♔g4 ♗f2 7 ♔f3 ♔d4 8 ♔e2! ♔e4 9 ♔f1 it's mission successfully accomplished.

2 ♘f7!! ♘xf7 3 ♔g6! ♘e5+!

Again, if 3...♔c6 4 ♔xf7 ♔d5 5 ♔g6 ♗e3 6 ♔f5 g3 7 ♔g4 ♗f2 8 ♔f3 ♔d4 9 ♔e2 ♔c3 10 ♔f1 and draws.

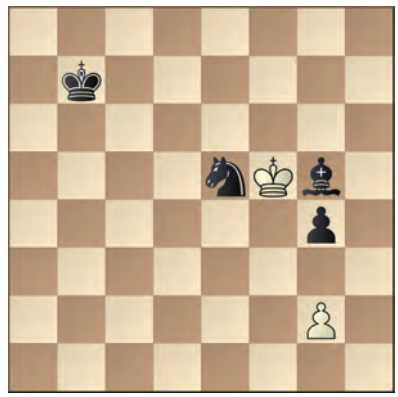
4 ♔f5!!

Turning down the gift as the king is persistently after the knight. 4 ♔xg5? loses to 4...♔c6! 5 ♔f4 ♔d6! 6 ♔e4 (or 6 ♔f5 ♔d5) 6...♔e6 7 ♔f4 ♔f6 8 g3 ♔e6 9 ♔g5 ♔d5 10 ♔f5 ♔d4 11 ♔f4 ♔d3! when the resulting pawn ending is an easy win for Black.

4...♘f7

4...♗f6 5 ♔xf6 ♘f3 6 ♔f5 ♘h2 7 ♔f4 leads Black nowhere either.

5 ♔g6 ♘e5+ 6 ♔f5!



This is an amazing positional draw, despite the two extra pieces.

6...♘f7 7 ♔g6

Now if the knight moves away to the d-file, Black will lose his bishop and then pawn.

7...♔c6 8 ♔xf7 ♔d5 9 ♔g6 ♗e3 10 ♔f5 g3 11 ♔g4 ♗f2 12 ♔f3 ♔d4 13 ♔e2 ♔e4 14 ♔f1

Here we have the very same fortress that Shankland overlooked. It's a draw by either repetition or stalemate. Had Sam ever seen this study even just once he most likely wouldn't have resigned, which just reminds us of the importance of pattern recognition.

After round 11 Carlsen and Giri were the joint leaders with 7½ points each, to the delight of the home crowd. The last time a Dutch victory occurred at Wijk was when Jan Timman won the top group back in 1985. The enthusiasm, however, subsided somewhat in the penultimate round when Carlsen beat Duda while Giri only drew with Radjabov.

In their direct final round encounter Giri could not crack Carlsen's favourite

Sveshnikov variation of the Sicilian and had to settle for a draw and a respectable second place, while the unbeaten Carlsen could happily add a seventh Wijk aan Zee title to his collection. The only other unbeaten player was the Chinese no.1 Ding Liren, who won two games as he shared third place with Nepomniachtchi and Anand. Here is one of Ding's better efforts.

S.Shankland-Ding Liren
Round 5
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0–0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 h3 ♗b7 9 d3 d6 10 c3 ♘a5 11 ♗c2 c5 12 ♘bd2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1 h6 14 ♘e3 ♗f8 15 b4 cxb4 16 cxb4 ♘c6 17 a3 d5

18 ♘g4?!

White is after kingside activity at the expense of completing his own development. Correct was 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 exd5 ♕xd5 20 ♗b3 ♕d7 21 ♗b2 with roughly equal chances.

18...♘xg4 19 hxg4 dxe4 20 dxe4 ♕xd1 21 ♖xd1 a5! 22 bxa5?!

22 ♖d7 ♗c8 23 ♖c7 ♘d8 24 bxa5 was probably White's last chance, even though 24...♗xg4 25 ♗d2 ♗d6 26 ♖c3 ♖xa5 leaves Black a comfortable pawn up.

22...♘xa5 23 ♖b1 ♗c6 24 ♘d2 ♖ed8

Black is better also after 24...♘c4 25 ♘xc4 bxc4.

25 ♔f1 ♘b7 26 ♖b3 ♗d7! 27 f3?

Losing, but White finds it difficult to maintain the harmony in his camp. For example, 27 ♗b2 ♖ac8 28 ♖c3 b4! 29 axb4 ♗b5+ 30 ♔g1 ♗xb4 31 ♖b3 ♗e2, winning.

27...♖ac8 28 ♗b1

Jorden van Foreest is one of the Dutch chess world's big hopes and made his debut in the Masters at Wijk this year. He did well to win three games while finishing in joint last on '-3'.

28...b4!

The threat of 29...♗a4 is decisive.

29 ♖b2

An exchange sacrifice wouldn't help either: 29 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 30 axb4 ♗a4 31 ♖e1 ♖xc1 32 ♖xc1 ♖xd2, winning a piece.

29...♗a4 30 ♖e1 ♖c7 31 ♗a2

White's helpless pieces desperately seek activity, but alas too late. 31 axb4 ♖dc8! wins material.

31...bxa3 32 ♖b6 ♗c5 33 ♖b1 ♗c2 0-1

White's rook is dominated and now an exchange and pawn down, nothing much is left for him to fight for.

The final round saw also two eye-catching miniatures. First, the shortest victory in the entire tournament and then a short and attractive fighting draw.

R.Rapport-J.Van Foreest
Round 13
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 ♕a4+

The mainline 5 e4 had been seen three times in earlier rounds.

5...♘bd7 6 e4 a6 7 ♗xc4 ♖b8 8 ♕c2 b5 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 10 ♗f4 ♖c8 11 d5 exd5 12 0-0-0

Following 12 0-0 ♘c5 13 exd5 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♗e7 15 ♖fe1 0-0 16 a3 ♗d6 the position is roughly equal.

12...d4?!

An unsuccessful novelty. 12...♘c5 13 e5 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘xd3+ 15 ♖xd3 g6 seems a better try.

13 ♘xd4 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 c5?!

Black would do better to try to complete his development.

15 ♘f5 g6 16 ♗e2! ♘g7?

16...b4 17 ♘d5 ♘hf6 18 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 was a better attempt to survive, although after 19 ♕d2 Black's position is still pretty suspicious.

17 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 18 ♖xd6

In view of his king being stuck in the centre, as well as the pressure on the central open file and the weakness of the dark squares, there is not much hope left for Black.

18...♕e7 19 ♖hd1 ♗c6

20 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 21 ♘d5 1-0

Black's position falls apart after, for example, 21...♕e6 22 ♕c3 0-0 23 ♘f6+.

S.Mamedyarov-V.Fedoseev
Round 13
Sicilian Scheveningen

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e6 7 f4 ♗e7 8 g4!?

A pretty rare and sharp choice in the

The ever enthusiastic Indian Grandmaster Vidit. He found the going a little tough at times, but scored well against the tailenders, Mamedyarov, van Foreest and Kramnik.

Scheveningen variation, compared to the natural developing sequence 8 ♗e3 ♕c7 9 0-0 0-0.

8...d5 9 e5 ♘fd7 10 g5 ♕b6 11 a3

White prepares his next developing move. Now Black should seek counterplay on the kingside, challenging the opponent's seemingly solid pawn formation without delay.

11...h6 12 ♗e3 hxg5

Naturally not 12...♕xb2 13 ♘a4 and the queen is trapped.

13 f5!

13...♘xe5 14 ♘xe6! ♕xe3

Forcing matters. Black can also keep the game going by 14...♕c6!?, although he should then be ready for the sacrifice of the flying knight: 15 ♘xg7+!? ♔f8 16 ♘xd5 ♔xg7 17 ♖g1 ♖d8! 18 ♘xe7!? ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♘f3+ 20 ♔f2 ♘xg1 21 ♘xc6 ♘h3+ 22 ♔g3 ♘xc6 23 ♔xh3 ♗xf5+ with equality.

15 ♘xd5 ♘f3+ 16 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 17 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 18 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 19 ♔e1 ♘f3+ ½-½

Besides the three world champions in the field, the only other participant who had won the tournament before was the Azeri star Teimour Radjabov, the co-winner of the 2007 edition (jointly with Aronian and Topalov). He was still a favourite for one of the top places, but dropped a couple of precious half-points and had to settle for fifty percent. Here is how Radjabov beat the rising Indian rstar in one of the most exciting games of the tournament.

T.Radjabov-S.Vidit
Round 7
Ragozin Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 ♕a4+ ♘c6 6 e3 0-0 7 ♕c2 ♖e8 8 ♗d2 ♗d6 9 h3 a6 10 a3 ♗d7 11 ♗e2 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 h6 13 g4!? e5

Attacking in the centre to counter the opponent's kingside initiative, albeit at the cost of opening the light-squared diagonal.

14 g5 b5 15 ♗a2

15...exd4

An exciting alternative was 15...♘xd4!? 16 exd4 exd4+ 17 ♘e2 ♕e7 18 ♘fxd4 hxg5 19 ♗e3 ♗f4 20 ♗xf4 gxf4 21 ♕g6 c5 22 ♖g1 ♘g4!, with mutual chances.

16 gxh6!!

A surprise, whereas the expected 16 gxf6 ♕xf6 17 ♗d5 ♖ad8 18 ♘e2 ♘e5! allows Black a dangerous initiative for the sacrificed piece.

16...dxc3

A creative idea to secure Black's kingside was 16...♗f4! 17 hxg7 and only then 17...dxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♘e4.

17 ♗xc3 ♗e6 18 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 19 ♖g1 ♘e8?

And here a better defensive attempt was 19...♘h5 20 ♗xg7 ♗g3! 21 ♖xg3 ♘xg3 22 fxg3 ♕d6, with only an edge for White.

20 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 21 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 22 ♕h7! ♕f6 23 ♘g5 ♖xe3+ 24 ♔f1

Avoiding 24 fxe3? ♗g3+ 25 ♔d1 ♕f1+ 26 ♔c2 ♕e2+ 27 ♔b1 ♕d1+ 28 ♔a2 ♕d5+ 29 b3 ♕d2+ with perpetual check.

24...♘d8 25 ♕g8+ ♔e7 26 h7 ♗g3 27 ♘e4 ♖xe4 28 ♖xg3 ♖h4 29 ♖d1

Many roads lead to Rome, perhaps the most direct being 29 ♖e1+ ♔d6 30 ♖d3+ ♔c5 31 ♖e8.

29...♖xh7 30 ♖e3+ ♘e6 31 ♕xa8 ♖h8 32 ♕c6 ♔f8

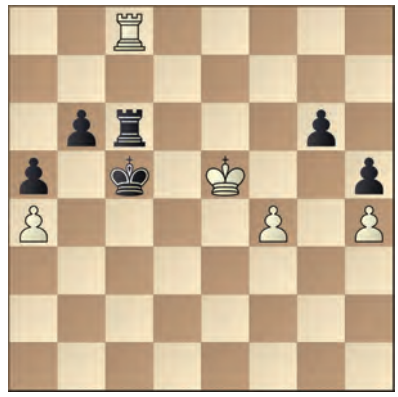
33 ♖xe6! The fastest and most elegant finish.

33...♕xe6 33...fxe6 is naturally met by 34 ♖d7.

34 ♖d8+ ♔g7 35 ♕c3+ f6 36 ♕xc7+ 1-0

And here is how Radjabov was tempted by incorrect exchanges into an instructive and lost pawn ending during a bad day at the office.

T.Radjabov-V.Fedoseev
Round 9

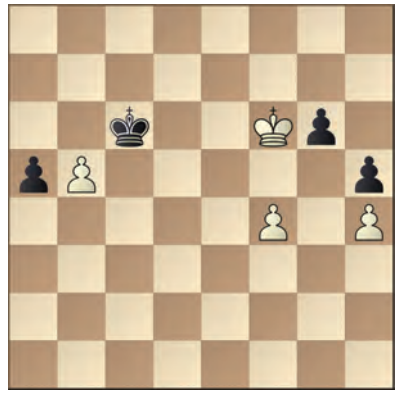


10 moves earlier, in a drawish rook ending, Radjabov had blundered a pawn. Many rook endings are still defensible even a pawn behind, but White now tried to force a draw.

82 ♖xc6+?

The Azeri calculated the exchanges to a pawn ending, deciding it was a forced draw and so saw no reason not to go for it. Instead, he had to keep on defending an inferior rook ending. Following 82 ♖d8 ♔b4 83 ♖d4+ ♔b3 84 ♖e4 ♖c2 85 ♔f6 ♖g2 86 ♔g7 ♖g3 87 ♔f7 ♖g4 88 ♔f6 ♔c3 89 ♖e3+ ♔b4 90 ♖e4+ ♔b3 91 ♖d4 White seems to be able to hold.

82...♔xc6 83 ♔f6 b5 84 axb5+



84...♔d6!! 0-1

A nasty surprise. All of a sudden White realises that his calculations contained a tiny, yet decisive flaw. After 85 ♔xg6 a4 86 f5 a3 87 f6 a2 88 f7 ♔e7 89 ♔g7 a1♕+ Black promotes with check, jeopardising White's own promotion.

Most of the players in the Masters are big stars in their countries. Two of the younger ones who have already made it to the top are Hungary's no.1 Richard Rapport and Poland's leading player Jan-Krzysztof Duda, who are just 22 and 20 years old respectively.

J.K.Duda-R.Rapport
Round 10

So far it had been a quiet game with no dramatic events, but now...

31 ♘b3!?

To open up the central file for a queen invasion of the eighth rank.

31...♗xb3 32 ♕d8??

Consistent, but the more modest 32 ♕b2! was correct, and if 32...♖c8 33 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 34 ♕xb3 ♕c1+ 35 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 36 ♔f1 ♔g7 with eventual equality. Now Black draws a hidden and strong card out of his sleeve.

32...♖c1+ 33 ♔f2 ♕f1+ 34 ♔g3 f4+! 35 ♔xf4

35 exf4 loses to 35...♕e1+ 36 ♔h3 ♗e6+ 37 g4 ♗xg4+ 38 fxg4 ♖c3+, mating.

35...♖c4+ 36 ♔g3

36 e4? is severely punished by 36...g5+! 37 ♕xg5 ♕c1+ 38 ♔f5 ♖c5+ 39 e5 ♕c2+ 40 ♔f4 ♕d2+ 41 ♔f5 ♗c2+ 42 ♔f6 ♖c6+ and wins.

36...♕e1+ 37 ♔h3

37...♖c8!!

The zwischenzug that White had overlooked when choosing his 32nd move. It not just interferes with the eighth rank, but also opens the h3-c8 diagonal for a deadly check.

38 ♖xc8 ♗e6+ 39 g4 hxg4+ 40 fxg4 ♕xe3+ 41 ♔h4

Also hopeless is 41 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 42 ♔g3 ♕xg4+ 43 ♔f2 ♗xc8.

41...♕f2+ 0-1

In view of the unpleasant choice between 42 ♔g5 ♗xc8 43 ♕xc8 f6 and 42 ♔h3 ♕f3+, White resigned.

The Masters finished with a touching moment. Following his last place, 42-year-old Vladimir 'Big Vlad' Kramnik announced his retirement from classical chess tournaments, a decision he had apparently taken a couple of months earlier. From now on the 14th world champion will be involved in scholastic chess projects and will occasionally still take part in rapid and blitz tournaments, as well as simultaneous exhibitions. His first post-retirement simul was actually held right after the conclusion of Wijk aan Zee, that being the traditional simul against parliamentarians and journalists in the parliament building in The Hague.

The Challengers

The Challengers was a Category 14 tournament (average rating 2580), featuring several promising young talents, and also a former world-class player, the 52-year-old Evgeny Bareev, formerly of Russia and nowadays Canadian. The youngest participant was the Indian Grandmaster Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, while the host country was represented by GMs Erwin L'Ami and Lucas van Foreest, Jordan's younger brother, as well as IM Stefan Kuipers, the winner of last year's top tienkamp.

The rating favourites were the Ukrainian Anton Korobov and the Belarussian no.1 Vladislav Kovalev.

A.Korobov-V.Kovalev
Round 8
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♖e8 9 f3 c6 10 ♔h1 ♘h5 11 g4 ♘f6 12 ♗f4 h5 13 ♘f5!?

An interesting positional sacrifice to open up lines against the black monarch.

13...gxf5 14 gxf5 d5

Following 14...♘bd7 15 ♖g1 ♔h7 16 ♕xd6 (if 16 ♗xd6 ♗h6!) 16...♕e7 17 ♕d2 ♖g8 18 ♖g5 ♘e5 19 ♖ag1 White seems to have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece.

15 cxd5 cxd5 16 e5

16...♗xf5

Returning the gift straight away seems better than doing so later: 16...♘h7 17 f6 ♘xf6 18 ♖g1 ♘g4 19 fxg4 h4 20 g5 ♗f5 21 ♘xd5 is a little better for White.

17 exf6 ♕xf6 18 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 19 ♘e7+! ♖xe7 20 ♕d8+ ♗f8 21 ♖g1+ ♗g4 22 fxg4

	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Pts	TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2835	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	9	2888
2	Anish Giri	NED	2783	½	X	0	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	9	2861
3	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2763	½	1	X	½	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	½	0	1	8	2809
4	Ding Liren	CHN	2813	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	8	2805
5	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2773	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	8	2809
6	Santosh Gujrathi Vidit	IND	2695	½	½	0	½	½	X	0	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	7	2787
7	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2757	½	½	½	½	½	1	X	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	7	2753
8	Samuel Shankland	USA	2725	½	0	1	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	0	½	1	1	7	2755
9	Richard Rapport	HUN	2731	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	½	1	½	7	2755
10	Jan-Krzysztof Duda	POL	2738	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	1	½	0	1	6	2697
11	Vladimir Fedoseev	RUS	2724	½	0	0	½	½	½	1	1	½	0	X	½	0	0	5	2668
12	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2817	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	5	2661
13	Jorden van Foreest	NED	2612	0	½	1	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	1	½	X	0	5	2654
14	Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2777	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	1	X	5	2641

22...♘d7! 23 gxh5+ ♔h8 24 ♕xa8 ♖xe2

Obviously not 24...♕xe2?, which allows 25 ♕xb7 and then 26 ♕g2.

25 ♖ae1 ♖xe1 26 ♖xe1 ♕f2 27 ♗g3 ♕f3+ 28 ♔g1 ♔h7 29 ♖f1

Or 29 ♗f2 ♕g4+ 30 ♗g3 ♕f3, repeating moves. **29...♗c5+ 30 ♗f2 ♕g4+ 31 ♔h1 ♕e4+ 32 ♔g1 ♕g4+ ½-½**

Kovalev went on to prove to be the strongest player in the field, finishing first with an unbeaten 10/13 and so gaining an entry ticket to next year's Masters. Three strong GMs shared second place on 8½, the Hungarian Benjamin Gledura and the Russians Andrey Esipenko and Maksim Chigaev.

Next month Daniel King will present the lively encounter Van Foreest-Bareev. Here is another instructive game from the Challengers.

R.Praggnanandhaa-M.Chigaev
Round 10

White is a pawn ahead, but it is far from easy to exploit it against the well coordinated enemy camp.

30 ♔f1 ♗d8 31 ♖c5 ♖d6 32 ♖c8 f4 33 ♗c5 ♖d7 34 ♔e2 ♔f5 35 ♗f2 ♗e7 36 ♖a8

White is reluctant to enter passivity with 36 ♖h8 ♗f6 37 ♖xh5+ ♔g6 38 ♖h3 e4 and yet that was probably his best winning chance, with the possible follow-up 39 ♗h4 ♗e5 40 ♗e1 ♗f6 41 a4 ♖b7 42 b4, thereby retaining a clear advantage.

36...h4 37 ♖xa6 h3 38 g3

39 gxh3!? naturally allows considerable counter-chances owing to Black's advanced passed pawn pair and yet taking the risk might have supplied another chance to play for a win after 38...♗f6 39 ♖a7.

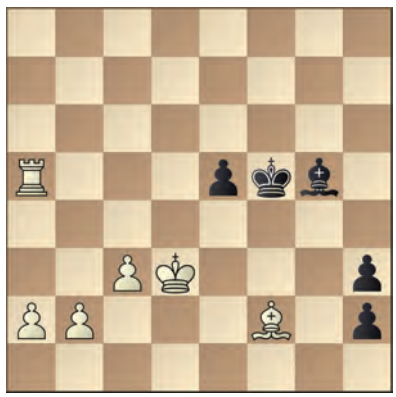
38...♗g5 39 ♖a5?! ♖d2+!

Undoubtedly a nasty surprise and now White faces an unpleasant choice to make on move 40.

40 ♔xd2

40 ♔f1 ♖xb2 41 a4 fxg3 42 ♗xg3 ♗f4 would pass the initiative to Black.

40...fxg3+ 41 ♔d3 gxh2



42 ♖xe5+!

White is lucky to strike back, while mutual sacrifices of the same piece are ever good to see.

42...♔xe5 43 ♗g3+ ♗f4 44 ♗xh2 ♗xh2 45 ♔e3??

A terrible blunder when on the verge of salvation. An easy and familiar draw could have been obtained by virtue of 45 ♔e2! ♗g3 46 ♔f1.

45...♗g3! 46 ♔f3 ♗e1

Or 46...♗h4, shockingly and decisively creating an insurmountable barrier for the white king.

47 a4 ♔d5 48 a5 ♔c5 49 b3 ♔b5 50 b4 ♗h4 51 c4+ ♔a6 0-1

White is running out of waiting moves and must soon face a deadly zugzwang.

Vladislav Kovalev was a worthy winner of the Challengers and will now compete in the Masters section in 2020. His sense of dynamism and calculation are impressive.

Anne Haast – Study Solving Champion

The tenth edition of the traditional ARVES study solving competition was held during the last weekend of the huge Wijk aan Zee chess festival. 14 participants had to solve 9 original (unpublished) challenges in three hours. In the absence of GM Twan Burg, the winner of the three previous editions, the surprising victor was the Dutch former over-the-board ladies' champion WGM Anne Haast, the youngest participant in the field, who scored 33 out of a maximum 45 points

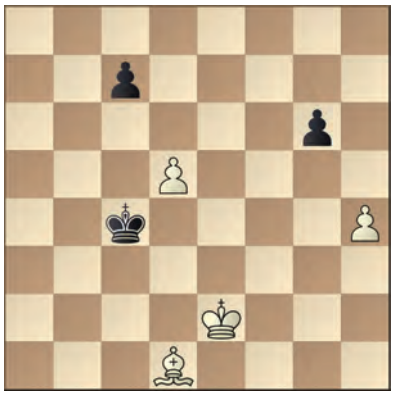
	Name	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Points	TPR
1	Vladislav Kovalev	BLS	2687	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	10	2783
2	Andrey Esipenko	RUS	2584	½	X	½	½	1	½	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	9	2690
3	Benjamin Gledura	HUN	2615	0	½	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	9	2687
4	Maksim Chigaev	RUS	2604	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	9	2688
5	Anton Korobov	UKR	2699	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	8	2628
6	Erwin L'Ami	NED	2643	½	½	0	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	8	2632
7	Evgeny Bareev	CAN	2650	½	1	½	½	½	0	X	0	0	½	1	1	½	1	7	2604
8	Parham Maghsoodloo	IRI	2679	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	7	2601
9	Lucas van Foreest	NED	2502	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	X	½	½	½	1	0	6	2557
10	Vincent Keymer	GER	2500	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	6	2529
11	Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	IND	2539	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	5	2496
12	Dinara Saduakassova	KAZ	2472	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	X	½	½	4	2413
13	Elisabeth Paehtz	GER	2477	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	4	2413
14	Stefan Kuipers	NED	2470	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	½	½	X	3	2378

in what was a very successful debut.

The runners-up were three experienced solvers who scored 29 points each: Wouter van Rijn came second after using just 173 minutes' thinking time, while Willem van Briemen and Martin van Essen, who needed the maximum of 180 minutes, shared the third prize. The organiser was your author and the arbiter Luc Palmans from Belgium.

From the nine studies, do please give the following two a try!

Martin Minski
Probleemblad 2019



White to play and win

How can White avoid the draw following the fall of the centre pawn?

1 ♗b3+!

The only way to stop the black king from getting to the right corner just in time. Instead, 1 ♔f3? ♔xd5 2 ♔g4 ♔e6 3 ♔g5 ♔f7 4 ♔h6 ♔g8 5 ♗b3+ ♔h8 draws.

1...♔xb3 2 ♔d3!

2 d6? is premature owing to 2...cxd6 3 ♔d3 ♔b2! 4 ♔d4 ♔c2 5 ♔d5 ♔d3, with a draw.

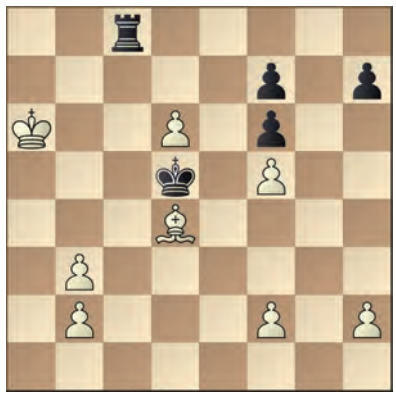
2...♔b4 3 d6!

Perfect timing, whereas 3 ♔d4? proves too slow following 3...♔b5 4 d6 ♔c6! 5 dxc7 ♔xc7 6 ♔e5 ♔d7/♔d8 7 ♔f6 ♔e8 8 ♔xg6 ♔f8 9 ♔h7 ♔f7 and draws.

3...cxd6 4 ♔d4 ♔b3 5 ♔d5 ♔c3 6 ♔xd6 ♔d4 7 ♔e6 ♔e4 8 ♔f6 ♔f4 9 ♔xg6 ♔g4 10 h5

And White wins.

Jan Timman - after A. Wotawa
The Problemist, 2019



White to Play and Win

Can White save his proud advanced passed pawn? Actually he can't, but in return he can snare the enemy rook thanks to an amazing piece of domination.

1 ♔b7! ♖d8 2 ♗c5!! ♔xc5 3 ♔c7! ♖xd6 4 b4+ ♔d5 5 b5 ♔e5 6 f4+!

Not 6 b6? ♖d2 and Black even wins.

6...♔d5 7 b4!! h6 8 h3 h5 9 h4

Black has run out of waiting moves, so he must lose his rook and consequently the game.

At the traditional closing ceremony, often known after its main dish as the pea soup evening, Carlsen was awarded the winner's trophy for the Masters by Theo Henrar, the chairman of Tata Steel Netherlands, while the trophy for the Challengers was handed to Vladislav Kovalev by Martijn Smit, the mayor of the city of Beverwijk, to which the municipally of Wijk aan Zee belongs. The organising team, not least tournament director Jeroen van den Berg, can be most satisfied with another successful edition of the 'Wimbledon of Chess'.

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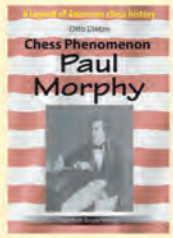

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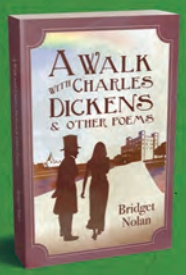

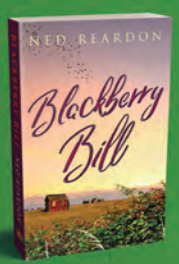

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How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King

Going into the last round of the Tata Steel tournament, Magnus Carlsen held a half-point lead over Anish Giri, and by chance they were to play each other in a game that would decide the title. Given that Giri was playing with the white pieces, and in view of the prickly relationship that exists between the players, expectations for a great fight were high.

The night before the game, Giri had given an interview in which he was asked about his prospects in this "must win" situation. He shot back with: "Why 'must win'? You assume that I want to win the tournament... I think Magnus has also a lot to prove. I'm just going to defend with the white pieces and see what happens" – to the laughter of those in the room and Giri himself.

The 24-year-old enjoys joking, poking, and wrong-footing his interlocutors, and it seemed that his humour was just a typical way of lifting a little pressure from himself by deflecting discussion. Yet there was more truth to this statement than one might have imagined.

In that closing encounter, Giri repeated Carlsen's game against Radjabov from two rounds before, right up until move 14.

Magnus Carlsen in action in St. Petersburg where he crushed his great Twitter rival, Anish Giri.

A.Giri-M.Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2019

Instead of Radjabov's 15 a3, which had led to an uneventful and quick draw, Giri went for **15 ♗g4** – as decent computers recommend. Game on? Apparently not. Carlsen avoided the positionally undesirable exchange of bishops with **15...♗b7**, and at this moment Giri's resolve crumbled. He admitted afterwards that he was unfamiliar with the position and instead of playing the natural 16 ♕d3, keeping the tension, he chose a path that led to exchanges: **16 ♘cb4 ♘xb4 17 cxb4**. Damaging the queenside pawns in this way is not a serious winning attempt. In fact the way the game turned out, Carlsen could have played for a win if he had been bothered – but there was no need. A draw sufficed to win the tournament.

Giri's pre-game statement was uncannily accurate and says much about his character. For all his taunting of the world champion in interviews and on Twitter, he doesn't feel ready to take him on in a full-blooded fight to the finish.

Nevertheless, his cautious, step-by-step approach has brought him to a rating of 2797 and no.4 on the live list, and that could get him a place in the next Candidates tournament if he fails to qualify through the FIDE Grand Prix, World Cup or FIDE Swiss. That is his ultimate ambition, and that justifies his approach on the chess board.

While Carlsen and Giri's last round battle at the Tata Steel tournament is worth studying, it is hardly suitable for this test. Instead I have selected their game from the World Blitz Championship in St. Petersburg, played just before New Year. Just to remind you, Carlsen won the title with a superb score of 17/21, while Giri finished on 13½ which put him in tenth position. As it is blitz, one cannot expect a game free from blunders, and that is the case here. In fact, Carlsen plays accurately, apart from one slip near the end; but by that stage, time and the tide of initiative were against Giri and the result was inevitable. The game was played in round 13, at the start of the second day.

Begin after the first diagram. Whenever Black has moved, stop and try to guess White's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

M.Carlsen-A.Giri
World Blitz Ch., St. Petersburg 2018
English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6

The English Four Knights has been the

starting point of some of the most dramatic and significant games over the past thirty years of modern chess. 4 e3 came back into fashion last year, but 4 g3 has seen the most activity, centred on the variation 4...♗b4 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 0-0 e4 7 ♘g5 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 ♖e8 9 f3, which is lively.

Instead, Carlsen plays an old speciality of Aaron Nimzowitsch. Thinking of his world championship games in the autumn, it is notable to see him employing this blocking strategy in the centre with both Black and White. He feels comfortable in positions with a fixed pawn structure.

4 e4 ♗c5

Giri plays the most positionally ambitious move, taking control over the dark squares, inducing Carlsen to break open the position.

5 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 6 d4 ♗b4 7 dxe5 ♘xe4

The test starts here.

8 ♕f3

Three points. Something had to be done about the threat to the knight on c3, and attacking the knight forces a response from Black. In spite of the forcing nature of the position, White has a huge range of options at this point.

8 ♕d4 (*three points*) has been a popular continuation, for example: 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗e7 10 ♕g4 ♔f8 11 ♕f3 d6 12 ♗f4 h5 13 ♗d3 g5, Ljubojevic-Kramnik (remember him?), Monaco (rapid) 2002.

8 ♕d3 (*two points*) has the same intention, although it is a pity to block what is potentially the f1-bishop's best square on d3. Black also has the option to play 8...♘c5, which my computer likes, although 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗a5 is also fine.

8 ♕c2 (*one point*) isn't as effective, as 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗c5 10 ♗d3 ♕h4 claims ground, preventing White taking the initiative on the kingside.

8 ♕g4 isn't very good: 8...♘xc3 9 a3 (9 ♕xg7 ♘a4+ 10 ♔d1 ♖f8 safely bags material) 9...♗f8 10 bxc3 d6 11 ♕g3 ♕e7 and Black takes over the initiative.

8 ♕b3 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♕e7 is excellent for Black. White's queen is the wrong side of the pawns.

And, finally, 8 ♗d2 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 0-0. Having brought his king to safety first, Black is ready to hit out, and White has nothing to compensate for his rotten doubled pawns.

8...♘xc3

9 bxc3

One point.

9...♗e7

The bishop returns to defend the kingside. According to my database, seven games have previously arrived at this position, and White played the same move in every single one.

10 ♕g3

Five points. If White is to get anything from this position, then he has to act with vigour. This forces a weakness in Black's structure.

Routine development with 10 ♗d3 allows Black to free his position with ease: 10...d6 11 ♗f4 dxe5 12 ♗xe5 ♗f6 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♕xf6 gxf6. The same applies to 10 ♗f4 and 10 ♗e3 – no credit for any of these moves.

10...g6

Castling is more desirable, but in this case falls prey to a lightning attack: 10...0-0 11 ♗h6 g6 12 h4 d6 13 h5 dxe5 14 ♖d1 ♕e8 15 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 ♕xe5, with a winning position, Bacrot-Tabatabaei, Nakhchivan 2015.

11 ♗h6

Three points. Preventing castling and therefore presenting Black with practical difficulties.

Two points for 11 ♗d3 or 11 ♗e2. Not as pressing as the game continuation, but at least a weakness has already been created, so White has better chances of gaining the initiative.

11...d6

11...d5 was played in Petre-Svetushkin, Cappelle-la-Grande 2013, with what should have been fatal consequences: 12 ♖d1 c6 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♗b5+ ♗d7 and here it isn't clear to me why White rejected 15 ♖xd5, winning material.

12 ♗e2

Three points. The most prudent, preparing to castle kingside.

My first thought here would be to play 12 ♖d1 (*three points*), which presents Black with practical difficulties.

12 ♗d3 (*two points*) would be met by 12...♗f8! 13 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 14 0-0-0 ♗e6 with decent counterplay.

12 0-0-0 would feel good for about 30 seconds, but when Black's counterplay kicks in, you might feel a bit less clever: 12...♗e6 13 ♗e2 ♕d7, and after Black's king escapes to the queenside, whose king is safer?

12...♗e6

13 ♖d1

Three points. This puts the most pressure on Black.

13 0-0 (*one point*) is good, but lacks the force of the game continuation (as we will soon see).

13 0-0-0 (nil points) is still not very good, and for the same reasons as above.

13...♕d7

14 exd6

Three points. This forces a concession.

Instead, Ghaem Maghami-Vovk, Berlin (blitz) 2015, continued, inexplicably, 14 ♗f4 allowing Black's king to escape to safety: 14...0-0.

14 0-0 (no points) is also a missed opportunity: 14...0-0-0 and the king escapes without too much harm.

14 c5 doesn't bring any benefits after 14...d5.

14...cxd6

Not the move Giri wanted to make, but what happens to the more desirable 14...♗xd6? Answer on the next line.

15 ♕h4 (*two points*) prevents the king from escaping west and leaves Black in dire trouble.

15 0-0

Three points. This is blitz – so Carlsen keeps it simple. There were two alternatives that were also strong and worth *two points*:

a) 15 ♗g7 ♖g8 16 ♗d4 permanently rules out kingside castling and redeploys the bishop to the middle.

b) 15 ♕e3 is a strong centralisation.

15...0-0-0

The king escapes from the middle, but with the pawn shifted from c7, and an open b-file, it's not the cosiest of homes.

16 ♗e3

Three points. The bishop has fulfilled its role on the kingside and redeploys to a new and more threatening diagonal.

16 ♕e3 (*three points*). The same could be said for this move, swinging across to bring pressure to bear on the queenside.

16 ♖d2 (*two points)* prepares to double on the d-file or b-file. Not bad, but I would prefer not to split my rooks for the moment.

16 c5 (*one point*) lunges prematurely: 16...♕c6 with chances to survive.

16...♕a4

Instead of this, how would you react to 16...b6? Answer on the next line.

17 c5 (*two points*) forces open the b-file and diagonals for the bishops: 17...bxc5 18 ♗xc5. It's practically game over.

17 ♕f3

Two points. Starting to take aim at the queenside.

White has lots of good moves here and I would prefer 17 ♖b1 (*three points*). We know this is where the rook belongs and there is absolutely no need to count pawns – they are irrelevant when it comes to the attack.

Two points for all these alternatives: 17 ♕f4, 17 ♖d4, 17 ♖d2. They all keep the advantage.

17...♕c6

18 ♕f4

Two points. It is imperative to keep the queens on the board. 18 ♕g3 (*two points*) would also have been fine.

However, not 18 ♗xa7 ♕xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♗xc4.

18...b6

19 a4

Five points. The attack is in full swing. The rook's pawn advances to break up Black's queenside. No credit for others.

19...♖d7

Instead, how would you reply to 19...♕xa4? Answer on the next line.

20 ♖a1 ♕d7 and here one could play 21 ♖a6 or 21 ♖fb1 with imminent destruction, but 21 c5 bxc5 22 ♖fb1 is the most emphatic route to victory. *Two points* if you saw one of those continuations.

20 a5

One point. As advertised.

20...bxa5

21 ♖b1

Two points. The *same score* for 21 ♖a1.

21...♖c7

22 c5

Three points. A strong move, opening the file and the f1-a6 diagonal.

22 ♗xa7 (*three points*) was also good with the idea 22...♖xa7 23 ♕d4, sneakily forking the rooks. By the way, this could also have been played on the previous turn. *Balance your score* if you chose it then.

22...dxc5

23 ♗f3

No points! A natural move for a blitz game, but a mistake. When playing with little time on the clock, and when pressing an opponent who has even less, it is normal for a few fine details to be overlooked. The problem is that with 23...g5! Black can force simplification: e.g. 24 ♕g3 ♕d6! 25 ♕xd6 ♗xd6, or 24 ♕e5 f6 25 ♕g3 ♕d6. Perhaps the best that White can do is 24 ♗xc6 gxf4 25 ♗xf4 ♖xc6 26 ♖b8+ ♔d7 27 ♖xh8 ♖b6, but Black has excellent compensation for the exchange in the form of the two bishops, a well-centralised king and a potentially powerful passed pawn on the a-file.

23 ♗b5 (five *points*) is the best move, making room for White's queen to switch to a4, and the attack will be decisive.

23...♕d6

After this the game resumes its 'natural' course and it turns out that Carlsen's mistake was just a blip. Giri was already running very short of time and, no doubt demoralised, had accepted that he was doomed to grim defence. A counter-strike didn't enter his thoughts.

24 ♕e4

Two points. The *same score* for 24 ♕a4.

24...♖d8

This was played by Giri, but before completing the move, he lost on time (**1-0**). He could also have resigned in view of 25 ♖b8+! ♔d7 26 ♕a4+ ♖c6 27 ♗xc6+ ♕xc6 28 ♖b7+ and the queen drops.

Later, speaking to Norwegian TV, Magnus Carlsen remarked, "There are many who have fantasies as to what is the best way to start the day. This is mine."

Now add up your points:

0-14	Unlucky
15-28	Average Club Player
29-37	Strong Club Player
38-43	FIDE Master
44-49	International Master
50-56	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.

Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from various recent events, such as the 4NCL, although we do revisit that feast that was the London Chess Classic. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on page 53.

Warm-up Puzzles

(1) E.Paehtz-S.White
4NCL, Daventry 2018
White to Play

(2) J.Burnett-J.Carpenter
4NCL, Doncaster 2019
White to Play

(3) B.Hymer-M.Bramson
4NCL, Doncaster 2019
White to Play

(4) D.Kjartansson-S.Bergsson
Reykjavik 2019
White to Play

(5) M.Adams-S.Williams
British Knockout Ch., London 2018
White to Play

(6) J.McKenna-M.Leanse
Surrey vs Middlesex, London 2019
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 53

(7) E.Bennett-G.Dobson
Harrogate 2019
Black to Play

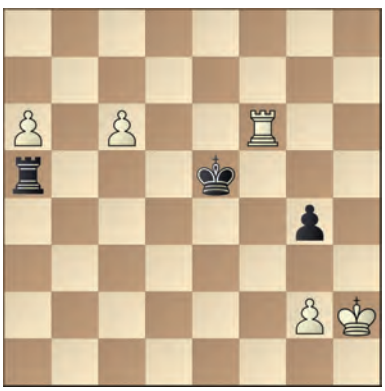
(8) C.Higgie-H.Baxter
4NCL, Doncaster 2019
White to Play

(9) L.Gonda-A.Ashton
4NCL, Daventry 2019
White to Play

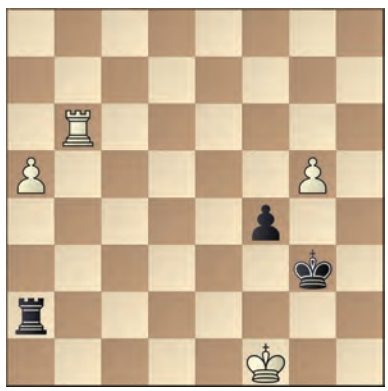
(10) G.Kasparov & T.Chapman - M.Sadler & D.Hassabis
London (rapid) 2018
White to Play

(11) M.Pollard-P.Anderson
4NCL, Doncaster 2019
White to Play

(12) N.Jayawarna-C.Bak
4NCL, Daventry 2019
White to Play



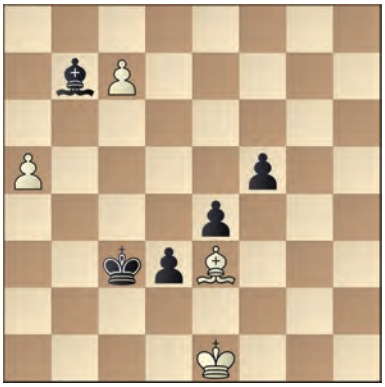
(13) R.Coathup-C.Duggan
4NCL, Daventry 2018
Black to Play



(14) R.Weaving-R.Bates
4NCL, Daventry 2019
White to Play and Draw

(15) F.Amonatov-A.Sarana
World Rapid Ch., St Petersburg 2018
White to Play

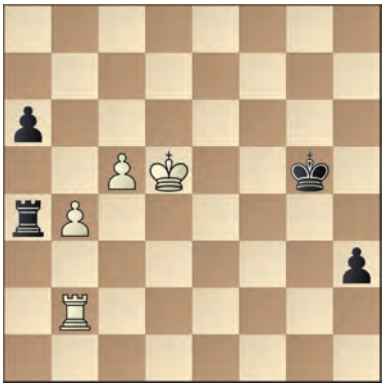
Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 53



(16) D.Daskalov-M.Galyas
4NCL, Daventry 2018
Black to Play

(17) O.Willson-T.Chapman
4NCL, Daventry 2018
Black to Play

(18) D.Simpson-M.Forster
London 2018
Black to Play and Draw

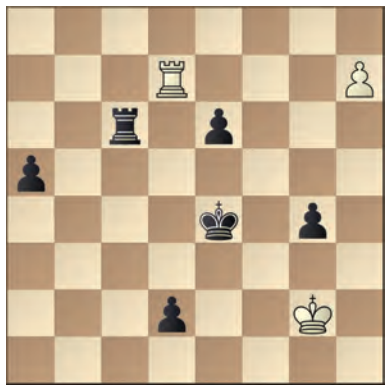


(19) E.Zanan-V.Mikhalevski
Israeli Ch., Maalot-Tarshiha 2018
Black to Play and Draw

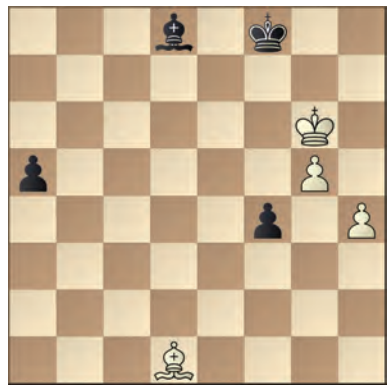
(20) P.Svidler-D.Andreikin
World Rapid Ch., St Petersburg 2018
Black to Play

(21) A.Kovchan-A.Korobov
Ukrainian Ch., Kiev 2018
White to Play

(22) F.Caruana-H.Nakamura
London (blitz) 2018
White to Play



(23) G.Jones-D.Fernandez
4NCL, Daventry 2019
Black to Play



(24) V.Erdos-T.Rendle
4NCL, Daventry 2018
Black to Play and Draw

Quality Training

IM John Pigott enjoyed his visit to Crete for a week at the Quality Chess Academy and reflects on other options available for adult training

Back in November, in sun-drenched Crete, Jacob Aagaard hosted the first Quality Chess Academy. Good training opportunities for adults are few and far between. I knew that Jacob had a track record of successful high-level training and that he was going to share the teaching with Boris Gelfand, a player I hugely admire. So, when I noticed the event on the Quality Chess website, I signed up at once.

The course was held at an excellent all-inclusive hotel by the beach. There were 11 attendees, from four continents, with a wide spread of ages. The Mediterranean weather was especially welcome to the four of us from England.

Training took place over five core days together with some additional discussion on the two travel days. Jacob led the course and took the morning sessions. Boris took the early afternoon sessions and in the late afternoon there were workshop sessions with both Jacob and Boris. Kostas Klokas, who organises many chess events in Crete, and Kallia Kleisarchaki, originally from Crete, but now with Quality Chess in Glasgow, seamlessly took care of the practicalities and admin.

Jacob believes that most players (including at least one of the world's top ten!) would benefit from working on their calculation. So, as well as there being a specific session on calculation, it was a recurrent theme throughout the week. Other topics included: 'seeing and thinking', rook endings, positional play and attacking chess. The sessions were interactive and always included plenty of exercises – there was no scope for day dreaming. Evening entertainment included a quiz and a blitz tournament.

Jacob's teaching was similar to that in his books. If you are serious about improving your chess and haven't looked at any of these, then do give one a try. Before I secured my IM title in 2017 I worked through Jacob's Attacking *Manual Volume 1* (Quality Chess, 2010), and I think this was the most helpful preparation I did.

The course was pitched at 'aspiring 2500s', although we didn't all fit that description, especially as we had quite a few GMs in the group. There was a spread of ability and experience – I was somewhere in the middle in terms of playing strength. This mix produced some interesting insights, such as when we looked at the following position.

A.Motylev-F.Peralta
Gibraltar 2018

Most of us were accustomed to 'test your chess' puzzles and quickly identified **20 ♗g6!** as the move to play. However, the most junior participant proposed 20 ♗xc4. Inexperience? We all looked at it together and found that after 20 ♗xc4 dxc4 (best) 21 f4 White has a really strong attack. For the little it's worth, my computer, given a lot of time, assesses this as over '+1.90'. So is 20 ♗xc4 as good as 20 ♗g6? Maybe – it depends on your follow-up. The game continued: **20...♗e7 21 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♘g6 ♖e8 23 f4 ♕a2 24 ♖b2!! ♘xb2 25 f5 ♖g8 26 f6 gxf6 27 exf6 ♗xf6 28 ♘e5+ ♔e7 29 ♕xg8 ♘b6 30 ♕f7+ 1-0**

Nice. However, had Peralta played 23...♕xc3 then best play on both sides would have led to a quick draw by repetition. At this stage in the week Jacob was not being too hard on us, so we got the chance to look at the position after 20...♗e7 and to try to improve on Motylev's play.

What would you play? (Solution at the end.) If, like Motylev, you did not find the right follow-up, then perhaps 20 ♗xc4 was best!

Another fascinating position that we examined was the following:

V.Ivanov-A.Hermlin
Helsinki 1996

The game continued: **1...♗g5 2 ♕h7+ ♔f8 3 ♖d7 ♕xb3+ 4 axb3 a2+ 5 ♔b2 ♗f6+ 6 c3 ♗g7 7 gxf7 ♗xf7 8 ♕d3 b5 9 ♕f3 ♖e7 10 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 11 ♕xc6** and Black resigned. Our task was to see if we could improve Black's defence. Try to analyse it yourself. Some of the variations are beautiful, but it is hard (solution again at the end).

We studied this one in pairs and I was working with James Jackson, my Barbican team-mate. I was really delighted when we solved this. It's harder to see resources when you're doing so on your own and especially when you're under attack – but the point of training is to help with that. This position comes from Jacob's *Practical Chess Defence* (Quality Chess, 2006), which is full of challenging positions. In his book Jacob showed how he thought White could have won earlier in the game. As a follow-up he wanted us to improve on his analysis in the book and find a defence to that winning try. I was euphoric when James and I cracked that one.

Boris took us through some of his games and these sessions provided a fantastic insight into the thought processes of a great player. Most of the time he discussed recent games, but I especially enjoyed his explanation of his game with Karpov from

Jacob Aagaard (left) and Boris Gelfand teamed up to produce Positional Decision Making in Chess *and* Dymanic Decision Making in Chess. *Both lectured at the training camp in Crete.*

Vienna, 1996. I'd seen the game recently in the *New In Chess Book of Chess Improvement* (New In Chess, 2017). You can find it there, with fuller notes written by Boris at the time.

B.Gelfand-A.Karpov
Vienna 1996

23 a4!

Pure strategy. White sets out to make the a6-pawn into a second weakness (the d5-pawn being the other).

23...♘d8 24 a5 ♗c6 25 ♘c3 ♗e8 26 ♗f1 bxa5

26...♖a7 would be met by 27 b5! and 26...b5 would be horrible.

27 bxa5 ♖b7

28 ♖a1!!

Boris said this was the most difficult move in the game. Certainly for me this move is the highlight, especially as I don't think it would ever occur to me. Overprotecting a5, in Nimzowitschian (or Karpovian!) style, creates a position where Black's task is really difficult. Watch how Black's position goes downhill from here.

28...♖c7 29 ♘a2 ♖b7 30 f3 ♘e6 31 ♖db1 ♖e7 32 ♘b4 ♘c5 Black's situation is grim since 32...♘xd4 33 exd4 ♖a7 loses to 34 ♘xa6 ♖axa6 35 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 36 ♖b6 ♖xb6 37 axb6 ♗c6 38 ♖c1.

33 ♖c1 ♖b7 34 ♖ab1 ♘fd7 35 ♘bc6 ♖c7 36 ♘e5 ♔e7 37 ♖c3 f6 38 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 39 ♖b8 ♘e6 40 ♖xc7+ ♘xc7 41 ♔f2 ♔e7 42 f5 g5 43 ♔e1

White prepares to advance his king all the way to c5. Black is more or less lost and Karpov decides to give up a pawn now.

43...♗b5 44 ♗xb5 ♘xb5 45 ♘xb5 axb5 46 ♖xb5 ♖c6 47 ♖xd5 ♖c3 48 ♔d2 ♖a3 49 ♔c2 ♖xe3 50 ♔b2 ♖e2+ 51 ♔b3 ♖xh2 52 a6 ♖h1 53 ♔b4 ♖a1 54 ♖a5 ♖b1+ 55 ♔c5 ♖b8 56 a7 ♖a8 57 ♔c6 h5 58 ♔b7 ♖xa7+ 59 ♔xa7 ♔d6 60 ♔b6 h4 61 ♖c5 h3 62 ♖c2 ♔e5 63 ♖h2 ♔xf5 64 ♖xh3 ♔f4 65 ♔c5 f5 66 ♔d4 g4 67 fxg4 fxg4 68 ♖h8 ♔f3 69 ♔d3 1-0

A really impressive game by Boris. It takes exceptional play to create a game like this against Karpov.

I found the course highly enjoyable. Focussing on chess for a week, away from distractions and in the company of other motivated chess players was always going to be fun, but the quality of the sessions made it special. The chess content was always interesting, sometimes fascinating, and the enthusiasm and love for chess of Boris and Jacob was inspiring. Like a chess tournament, it was not an easy ride – and there were highs and lows as I succeeded or failed in solving some of the challenging positions that were produced. Unlike my tournaments, there were no short days.

Has it improved my chess? Well, the right question is: have *I* improved my chess as a result of the course? And the answer is that I've made a start. I've found several of the ideas to be helpful, but real progress will depend on doing more homework. I found the course inspiring and motivating – and the inspiration and motivation persists three months later after some good wins and painful losses. I now have a clear idea of what I need to work on, and how to do it, but it won't come quickly or without real effort.

The next Quality Chess Academy will be held in May, again in Crete, but this time led by Jacob and the renowned Indian coach GM R.B. Ramesh. The format will be slightly different this time, enabling the course to work effectively for a wide range of playing abilities – details are available on the Academy website.

As I noted earlier, there does appear to be a shortage of coaching opportunities for adult players, although I see that many trainers offer one to one coaching, often via Skype. Of course, some players just like to play, but many are eager to improve. We are now seeing some interesting developments in this area. The Quality Chess Academy is one and I see that the Gibraltar Chess Festival has teamed up with the University of Gibraltar to offer a University Chess Seminar just before next year's Gibraltar Festival.

Closer to home, and pitched at a broader range of players, the first Hatton Garden Chess festival was held in London in November. This offered a combination of match play and coaching. The organisers carefully addressed factors that deter female participation and succeeded in running a well-received, gender-balanced event. The Casual Chess Café, which meets several nights a week in London, also encourages female chess players and offers free chess lessons for women. I hope these initiatives introduce a new series of inclusive events and inspire other organisers.

Solutions:

Motylev-Peralta: 21 ♘f5! exf5 22 ♗xf5 ♔d8 23 ♕xg7 is crushing, but not quite all over (if 23...♖f8 24 ♗xh6).

Ivanov-Hermlin: 1...♗f6! (natural enough, but we are just getting started) 2 ♖d7! (one beautiful point is 2 g7 ♕xb3+!! 3 cxb3 ♗f5+ 4 ♖d3 – 4 ♔c1 ♗b2+ 5 ♔d2 ♖ad8+ 6 ♕d6 ♖xd6# – 4...♗xd3+ 5 ♔c1 ♗b2+ 6 ♔d1 ♗h7 and White has no defence) 2...♗g7! (2...♖e7? 3 ♖xe7 ♕d4 4 ♕h7+ ♔f8 5 ♖xf7+ mates) 3 ♕h7+ (3 gxf7+ ♗xf7 4 ♖g1 ♖e1+!) 3...♔f8 4 gxf7 ♗xd7 (even better is 4...♗xf7 5 ♖g1 ♖e1+! 6 ♖xe1 ♕xf2 7 ♕e4 ♔g8) 5 ♕g8+ ♔e7 6 fxe8♕+ (6 ♕xg7 ♖f8 and Black defends and wins) 6...♖xe8 7 ♕xg7+ ♔d8 with some advantage.

Rock Solid

The stars again descended on Gibraltar, where Vladislav Artemiev proved too strong

The Gibraltar International Chess Festival was yet again a major success. Johann Hjartarson delivered a lecture which touched on Fischer, Hikaru Nakamura and Baskaran Adhiban gave masterclasses, and the Battle of the Sexes was the usual big hit with those at the Caleta Hotel and following online. Once more Simon Williams and Jovanka Houska did an excellent job anchoring the main commentary, with Tania Sachdev playing the role of star reporter/interviewer.

Quite simply put, Gibraltar is an extremely slick and impressive production. Tournament Director Stuart Conquest has put together a highly professional behind-the-scenes team, including our very own John Saunders who once again acted as press officer.

Once the dust had settled, after 10 extremely hard-fought rounds, the slightly surprising winner was Vladislav Artemiev. The 20-year-old Russian Grandmaster might have been seeded eleventh behind the likes of Vachier-Lagrave, Aronian, So, Yu Yangyi and Nakamura, but he was a fully deserving winner of the £25,000 first prize.

We've featured Artemiev a fair amount in *Overseas News* in the past couple of years and he breezed to 4½/5, displaying fine calculation and a good grasp of when to mix things up against lower-rated opposition. In the sixth round Artemiev sensibly put up the shutters against MVL and then had a second successive White, against a player synonymous with success at Gibraltar, the four-time champion Hikaru Nakamura, who ominously hadn't lost a classical game on the Rock in 10 years.

Vladislav Artemiev features in this month's 60 Seconds with... *and was a deserving winner on the Rock, inflicting an extremely rare defeat there on four-time champion Hikaru Nakamura.*

V.Artemiev-H.Nakamura
Round 7
Reti Opening

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 d5 3 ♗g2 e6 4 0-0 ♗e7 5 c4 0-0 6 b3 c5 7 ♗b2 ♘c6 8 e3 b6 9 ♘c3 dxc4

This solid choice has been played by countless strong players, but giving White a central majority is not without risk.

10 bxc4 ♗b7 11 ♕e2 ♖c8 12 ♖ad1 ♕c7 13 ♘e1 ♘e8!?

A new move. Nakamura echoes White's last, freeing his f-pawn for duty.

14 f4 ♘d6 15 ♘f3 a6 16 a4 f5

Completing the desired set-up. White finds himself unable for now to break in the centre without creating major weaknesses, so Artemiev looks to the kingside for expansion.

17 d3 ♗f6 18 h3! ♘b4 19 g4 g6 20 e4!?

Ratcheting up the tension and why not advance so with Black's knight having moved away from d4?

20...fxe4 21 dxe4 ♘xe4?

Possibly disliking the trend of the game, Nakamura elects to force matters, but he should really have preferred 21...♗d4+ 22 ♔h2 (22 ♘xd4? cxd4 23 ♖xd4 ♕c5 is rather awkward, and if 24 ♕f2 ♖xf4!) 22...♘e8 (unfurling further pressure against f4) 23 ♘xd4 cxd4 24 ♕d2! dxc3 25 ♕xc3 e5 26 ♕xb4 exf4 27 ♗f3 when White has the two bishops and a monster dark-squared one, but Black remains solid enough and anything might well happen in this pretty murky scenario.

22 ♘xe4 ♗xb2 23 ♘eg5 ♗xf3 24 ♖xf3!

Possibly the move Nakamura had underestimated. Instead, 24 ♕xe6+? ♔h8 25 ♘xf3 ♕xf4 26 ♖d7 ♗g7 27 ♕xb6 ♘c6 would have been fine for Black.

24...♗d4+ 25 ♔h1

Black finds himself a pawn up, but not for long with the key e6 pivot under heavy siege.

25...♖ce8 26 ♘xe6 ♕c6 27 f5

Cementing the octopus-like knight in place. Already in serious trouble, Nakamura now grabs a pawn.

27...♕xa4 28 fxg6!

Artemiev is not to be bluffed.

28...♖xf3 29 gxh7+ ♔h8

30 ♗xf3?

The human choice, but the silicon monster much prefers 30 ♕xf3! and if 30...♖xe6 31 ♕f8+ ♔xh7 32 ♖f1 when the attack is decisive, as shown by 32...♗g7 33 ♕f5+ ♖g6 34 ♗e4 ♕e8 35 ♕h5+ ♗h6 36 ♗xg6+ ♕xg6 37 ♖f7+, winning the queen.

30...♘c6?

Now White cleans up. The chance Artemiev has just missed would not have been easy to calculate, but one would have expected, at

When on just 3/5, Indian Grandmaster Murali Karthikeyan must have feared he'd finish outside the prizes, but he finished with an astonishing 5/5, even defeating MVL and in a Najdorf no less.

least if in good form, the normally highly resourceful Nakamura to have found here 30...♘d3! when 31 ♕xd3 (31 ♖xd3? ♕xc4 is actually a little awkward for White, who must avoid 32 ♖xd4 ♕xe2 33 ♗xe2 cxd4 34 ♘xd4 ♖e4, picking up a piece) 31...♖xe6 32 h4 ♖e8 followed by ...♕d7. White is clearly better, but converting in this rather unusual position would not be so easy.

31 ♘xc5! 1-0

Black finds himself losing serious material after 31...♖xe2 32 ♘xa4. Loose pieces drop off, as Dr Nunn would say.

Demonstrating that there was no fluke about that fine win, Artemiev held fairly comfortably against Levon Aronian in round 8. He then made good use of a positional exchange sacrifice to outplay David Navara, before winning yet again, and with the black pieces, against a slightly nervous Yu Yangyi in the final round. Victories against such world-class players do not come easily and Artemiev's rating performance was a whopping 2941. This is a man very much going places.

There was also a youthful surprise in the battle for second place, the final round seeing the 19-year-old Indian GM Murali Karthikeyan outplay Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Karthikeyan began with two draws against much lower-rated opposition, then turned on the style, but was outplayed by Hikaru Nakamura and found himself on just 3/5.

To win his final five games was a fine achievement by Karthikeyan, as well as a reminder of just how important momentum can be in a tournament. In the eighth round he kept his nerve as Black in a tricky endgame against Rauf Mamedov, ahead of grinding down Maxim Matlakov and then MVL too no less.

M.Karthikeyan - M.Vachier-Lagrave
Round 10
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e3 ♘g4 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5

One of the most positionally unbalanced lines of the Najdorf. Black will gain good dynamic play on the dark squares, but is creating some potentially serious weaknesses.

9 ♗g3 ♗g7 10 ♗e2 h5 11 h4 ♘c6 12 ♘f3 gxh4 13 ♗xh4 ♕a5 14 ♕d2 ♗e6 15 ♖d1 ♖c8 16 0-0

16...♖g8?!

This doesn't achieve a huge amount and allows White to make sense of his 15th move novelty. Instead, Black might have regrouped with 16...♗h6 17 ♕e1 ♘ge5 and ...♘g6 or even gone 16...♘ce5!?. The threat of ...♘g6 is a little awkward for White who would rather not go 17 ♘xe5? ♕xe5 18 ♗g3 ♕c5 when the h-pawn is again primed to advance. As such, 17 ♗xe7! was presumably Karthikeyan's idea when 17...♘xf3+ (17...♔xe7? 18 ♘d5+) 18 gxf3 (18 ♗xf3? ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♔xe7 wins a piece) 18...♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♔xe7 20 ♕xd6+ ♔e8 21 fxg4 hxg4 remains extremely unclear, but is most likely about equal.

17 ♘d5! ♕xd2 18 ♖xd2 ♗h6?!

This attempt to activate the bishop backfires. As such, Black should have settled for a solid if slightly worse position with 18...♗xd5 19 exd5 ♘ce5.

19 ♖dd1 f6 20 c3 ♗g5?!

Losing yet further time. Perhaps Black should add some cover to h5 while waiting with 20...♗f7, but in any case it's clear that things have gone wrong for him.

21 ♗g3 ♗h6 22 ♘h4!

The knight is bound for f5. Black will pretty much have to exchange it, after which White is left in full control of the light squares.

22...♔f7 23 ♘f5 ♗xf5 24 exf5 ♖g5 25 ♗c4 ♘a5 26 ♗d3

Karthikeyan continues to play excellent chess. Vachier-Lagrave now tries to thrash on the kingside, but the young Indian keeps his cool impressively.

26...♖cg8 27 ♗f4 ♖5g7 28 ♖fe1 ♘c6 29 ♗e4

Overprotection of g2 while beginning to eye that rather large hole on e6.

29...h4 30 f3!

Winning material.

30...♗xf4 31 ♘xf4 ♘ge5 32 ♗d5+ ♔e8 33 ♗xg8 ♘xf3+ 34 ♔f2 ♘xe1 35 ♗d5 ♖g5 36 ♔xe1 ♖xf5 37 ♘g6 ♖h5 38 ♖d3 ♖h6 39 ♘f4 e5 40 ♘e6 ♘e7 41 ♗xb7 ♔d7 42 ♘f8+ ♔c7 43 ♗xa6 d5 44 c4 f5 45 ♗b5 f4 46 ♖a3 1-0

Rarely does one see Vachier-Lagrave so badly outplayed.

The British challenge was led by Michael Adams, who was his typically solid and highly professional self, scoring an undefeated '+4' while never really threatening the top places. Nigel Short meanwhile reached 4/5, but was then outplayed by Levon Aronian and slid down the table. Gawain Jones would also like to have finished higher up, but had to settle for 6½/10 after being outplayed by the Indian Grandmaster Suri Vaibhav in the penultimate round. At least Jones got to share the best game prize with Alejandro Ramirez for their lively draw – a game we'll get to enjoy next month.

The star British performer was David Howell, who shared third place with a '+5' performance. That was all the more impressive considering he had overpressed against the Mongolian IM Sumiya Bilguun to find himself on just 1½/3. However, Howell came storming back, eventually pocketing £11,000 after keeping his cool against a far too optimistic Aronian.

L.Aronian-D.Howell
Round 10
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 ♗d3 ♘c6

5 c3 ♕c7 6 h3 g6 7 ♕c2 f6!

New and strong. Why shouldn't Black take over the centre?

8 ♘e2 e5 9 0-0 ♘ge7 10 dxe5

If Aronian really wanted to sacrifice a piece, he should likely have tried 10 c4!? e4 11 ♗xe4 dxe4 12 ♘bc3, attacking e4 while threatening both ♘b5 and d4-d5, although even here one would prefer to be Black after the calm 12...♗g7.

10...fxe5

11 c4?

This one stunned the crowd. After 11 ♕a4 ♗f5 12 ♗xf5 gxf5!? Black is clearly quite comfortably placed, but White is very much still alive and fighting after, say, 13 ♘a3 0-0-0 14 f4!.

11...e4

Trapping the bishop.

12 ♗xe4 dxe4 13 ♘bc3 ♗g7

Simple development as Howell trusts in the accuracy of his calculations. White has only one pawn and a couple of knight leaps for his pawn.

14 ♘d5 ♕d6 15 ♗f4 ♗e5

More simple chess and it's not entirely clear what Aronian had overlooked. Certainly on the adjacent board Hikaru Nakamura couldn't stop shooting him incredulous looks to the amusement of the world-wide audience. Here White can bag a second pawn with 16 ♕xe4, but after 16...♗f5 17 ♕e3 0-0 18 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♖ad1 ♖ae8! his compensation for the piece is totally insufficient.

16 ♖ad1 ♗xf4 17 ♘dxf4 ♕e5 18 b4!?

Desperation. The three-time British Champion now mops up well.

The start of one of the most surprising grandmaster games in recent years. Levon Aronian (left) was virtually unrecognisable as an early piece sacrifice backfired against David Howell.

Photo: John Saunders

Gawain Jones played some lively and dynamic chess at Gibraltar, continuing that stance at the Kings Head In Memoriam blitz in February which he won ahead of Howell, McShane and Sadler.

18...♘xb4 19 ♕b3 ♘bc6 20 c5 ♕xc5 21 ♘c3 ♕b4 22 ♕c2 0-0 23 ♘cd5 ♘xd5 24 ♘xd5 ♕a3 25 ♖fe1 ♗f5 26 ♖e3 ♕a5 27 ♕c4 ♖f7 28 ♘f6+ ♔g7 29 ♖d5 ♗e6 0-1

Gibraltar is arguably most famous for its efforts to attract the world's leading female players, one of whom stole the early headlines. Iranian IM Sarasadat Khademalsharieh reached 2/2 by grinding down the 2600-rated French GM Jules Moussard, the co-winner of the Open at the London Chess Classic. She then butchered the German Grandmaster Alexander Donchenko ahead of holding Levon Aronian no less. Khademalsharieh followed up with a draw with Baskaran Adhiban before the media attention possibly told as she lost her final four games.

The £15,000 women's prize was bagged by former women's world champion Tan Zhongyi, who made 7/10 for a 2585 performance. Another former champion, Mariya Muzychuk, faced a stronger field and performed at 2718, but finished half a point behind Tan and had to settle for £10,000.

Leading Scores:

1 Vladislav Artemiev (RUS) 8½/10
2 Murali Karthikeyan (IND) 8
3-5 Nikita Vitiugov (RUS),
David Howell (ENG),
David Anton Guijarro (ESP) 7½.

In next month's *CHESS*

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The Cairns Cup,
The Rise of the Machine

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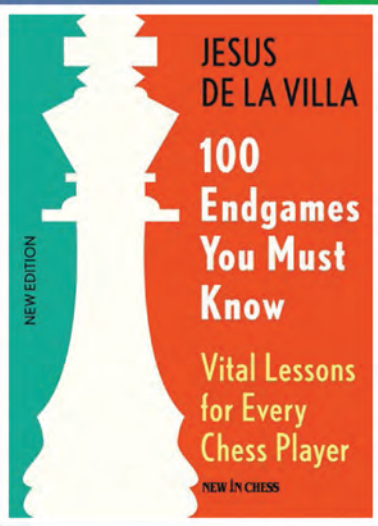
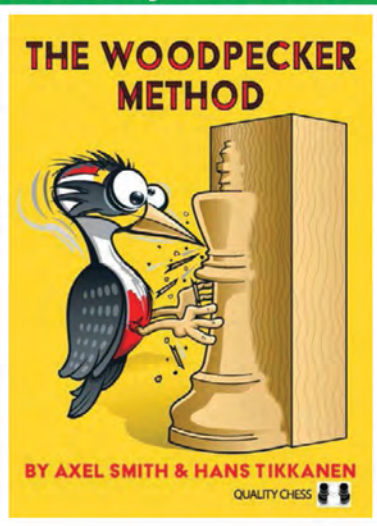
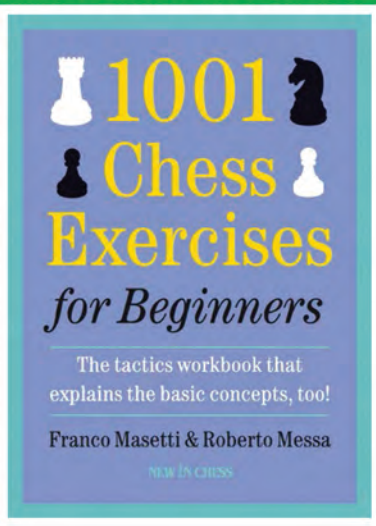
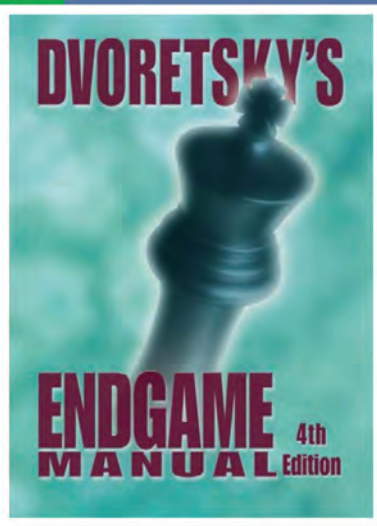








The End of Era

At the end of Wijk aan Zee, Vladimir Kramnik announced his retirement

Farewell then, Volodya, Big Vlad, the Conqueror of Kasparov. You may continue to entertain on occasion at rapid and blitz, but will be greatly missed at all the leading classical tournaments.

Vladimir Kramnik shocked the chess world when he announced his retirement at the end of Wijk aan Zee. Tributes immediately poured in from his colleagues, both in the Netherlands and on Twitter. Wijk aan Zee tournament director, Jeroen van den Berg, summed things up well: "I am honoured that Vladimir Kramnik has picked the Tata Steel Chess Tournament to be his last. I would have liked to see him to take leave with a better result, though. Vladimir is a great player. He is dynamic, all-round and a great fighter with a very keen insight. But above all he is a wonderful and warm person, with a great sense of humour. I will miss his presence in the top of the chess world, as will many chess aficionados all over the world."

It was just a shame at Wijk that, despite striving typically hard, Kramnik was unable to win all his final three games, victories over van Foreest and Fedoseev being followed by a defeat at the hands of Shankland in a lengthy, rather unbalanced battle. The 14th world champion admitted after that game that it was the right time to retire, "since my chess player motivation has dropped significantly in recent months".

One might wonder if age has begun to catch up with Kramnik, but he is only actually 43, some six years younger than his great rival Vishy Anand. We shouldn't forget that he was only 17 and an FM when selected for the 1992 Manila Olympiad, the tournament which saw his name become one known by pretty much every chess fan in the west as he racked up a huge 8½/9. That included a brutal demolition of John Nunn, with Murray Chandler commenting that "Kramnik played all of his games with [such] decisiveness and energy in Manila."

Kramnik would, of course, quickly establish himself as one of the world's leading players. Kasparov had little hesitation in recruiting him as a second ahead of the 1995 world championship match with Anand, while that year also saw Kramnik win for the first time the tournament with which his name would become synonymous, Dortmund. Kramnik made fine use of the Sveshnikov variation of the Sicilian throughout the nineties, adding many important new tweaks while playing some great dynamic chess with it. As for White, 1 d4 and 2 c4 gradually evolved into a 1 ♘f3, 2 c4 and 3 ♘c3 repertoire – once again Kramnik was very much at the forefront of fashion and would be copied by many, not least in Alexander Khalifman's *Opening for White According to Kramnik* series.

Due in part to his fine analysis of his opponent's weaknesses and adoption of the Berlin Defence, Kramnik famously wrestled the world title off Kasparov in 2000. A glittering career appeared to lie ahead, but for much of the next ten or so years Kramnik would suffer from an unusual and debilitating form of arthritis. Possibly to counter lower energy levels, he became known as someone extremely hard to defeat, but still remained one of the world's very best players and took part in some memorable matches for the world title. Who will ever forget the way he won on demand in the final game to retain his title against Peter Leko in 2004 or the infamous Toiletgate match of 2006?

As he got on top of the problems affecting his health, Kramnik steadily began to display more and more energy at the board. One would still have considered his style, as one would expect from a former student of Botvinnik, to be largely classical when he took part in the new-look 2013 Candidates tournament in London. By then it was fully clear that Kramnik had regained his mojo and again become a serious fighter, constantly striving for victory while happy to inject dynamism when needed, as well as grind all day if required. Indeed, had Kramnik not been defeated by the mercurial Ivanchuk in the final round, it would have been him, not Magnus Carlsen, who would have gone forward to a match with Anand.

In recent years Kramnik has, of course, become a firm fan favourite, often lighting up tournaments with his creativity. It's almost been as if the early Kramnik, the one who was forced to play more conventionally, both by Botvinnik and the requirements to compete with the best in the world, has reappeared, slightly offbeat openings and a number of unbalancing positional sacrifices creating all manner of problems for even the world's best. Who will ever forget that crazy Kramnik-Caruana encounter from the Berlin Candidates, or the 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 d3 ♗c5 5 ♗xc6 dxc6 6 0-0 ♕e7 7 h3 ♖g8!, which he introduced there en route to that sparkling victory over Aronian?

Andrey Filatov, the President of the Russian Chess Federation, has expressed hope that Kramnik will continue to play, including in even the 2020 Olympiad at Khanty-Mansiysk. One wonders what impact that will have on the self-confessed bohemian, Kramnik, who nowadays spends much of his time in Switzerland with French wife Marie-Laure Germon and their two children. Possibly had the Russian team not selected Kramnik on board 3, rather than his usual board 1, at the last Olympiad, his mind might not have wondered to thoughts of retirement.

Vladimir Kramnik leaves a rich chess legacy, but in large part as it helped him outplay the monstrously strong Beast of Baku, the opening with which he will always be most closely associated is the Berlin Wall. He imbued it with

It's only the opening, but already the body language indicates who would win the 2000 match.

many revolutionary new ideas and we shouldn't forget that the beast which is *AlphaZero* eventually settled on the Berlin as its defence to 1 e4 – greater confirmation that Kramnik was totally correct is hard to imagine.

V.Anand-V.Kramnik
Mainz (rapid) 2001
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♘c3 h6 10 h3 ♗d7 11 b3 ♔c8 12 ♗b2 b6

One of the key concepts pioneered by Kramnik, although ...b6 does not always mean that the king will settle on b7.

13 ♖ad1 ♘e7!?

This prophylactic retreat is another. Black ignores classical principles of development to regroup, while preparing to meet 14 g4?! with 14...h5.

14 ♖d2 c5 15 ♖fd1 ♗e6

A typical Berlin scenario. White is fully mobilised, but unable to dent Black's solid set-up. Meanwhile Black can advance on both flanks, only deploying his pieces once the best posts for them are apparent.

16 ♘e2 g5!

Seizing space and making sense of the position of all three minor pieces.

17 h4?

Unable to find a great plan, Anand lashes out, but now 17...♔b7! would have left Black firmly in the driving seat, and if 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 ♘xg5 ♗h6 20 f4 ♗xg5 21 fxg5 ♖ag8.

17...g4 18 ♘h2 h5?!

The subtle Berlin is not easy to handle at a fast time control, even for its greatest connoisseur. Here 18...♔b7 would have been pretty comfortable for Black after 19 ♘f4 (if 19 ♖d8? ♖xd8 20 ♖xd8 ♘c6) 19...h5 20 ♖d8 ♖c8.

19 ♖d8+ ♔b7 20 ♖xa8 ♔xa8 21 ♖d8+ ♔b7 22 ♘f4 ♘g6!

Recognising that matters have gone wrong, Kramnik offers a necessary exchange. It's time for development! Now 23 ♘xe6 fxe6 would reach a structure generally known to be quite pleasant for Black. Here White does have 24 ♖e8, but after 24...♘xh4 (24...♘e7 25 f3 gxf3 26 ♘xf3 ♔c6 might also be possible) 25 ♖xe6 ♘f5 26 ♖f6 ♘d4 Black should have enough counterplay.

23 g3!? c4!?

Rolling the dice in this very complex position.

24 bxc4?

Anand misses the fiendish point. 24 ♘xe6 fxe6 25 bxc4 ♔c6 26 ♔g2 would have favoured White, albeit with all three results possible in a typically unbalanced Berlin endgame scenario.

24...♘xf4 25 gxf4 g3!

In view of 26 fxg3 ♗c5+, White suddenly finds himself completely lost.

26 ♘f1 gxf2+ 27 ♔h2

27 ♔g2 ♖g8+ 28 ♔f3 ♗xc4 also wins with f2 still taboo.

27...♖g8 0-1

The dormant rook comes alive with deadly effect after 28 ♗a3 ♗xc4 29 ♖xf8 ♖g1.

A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

David Howell - @DavidHowellGM
Very sad to hear about the retirement of Vladimir Kramnik. It was an honour to play him several times, including as an 11-year-old. He also taught me a lesson at last year's Olympiad. A true gentleman and one of my favourite players. #legendofchess

Levon Aronian - @LevAronian
It's a sad day for chess. Another giant leaves the game earlier than we all would hope for. Vladimir Kramnik leaves an incredible legacy behind him. Almost every opening line played in last 25 years has his major input. Thanks maestro.

Peter Svidler - @polborta
Can't really imagine chess without Kramnik. He was always there, just a year older than me, and miles better at everything - an unattainable ideal to aspire to. Be well, and good luck with everything in the years to come.

Fabiano Caruana - @FabianoCaruana
Kramnik is one of the greatest players of all time and certainly one of the most influential figures for our understanding of the game. His understanding and creativity is something I've always admired. Sad to see him leave competitive chess.

Gibraltar International Chess Festival - @GibraltarChess Heart Breaking to see Navara go down fighting against Artemiev today. But, he showed why he is a champion even off the board. He analyzed with his opponent then patiently waited for the post game interview and spoke with contagious enthusiasm. We Love you David! #GibChess

Hikaru Nakamura - @GMHikaru
Solid chess can sometimes just lead to draws which means that sometimes you just have to throw your hands up in the air like what?!

Sergey Karjakin - @SergeyKaryakin
Even when @anishgiri wins, he is playing for a draw!

Sam Shankland - @GMShanky
"Do me a favor and and never resign another drawn position" - Border Control Agent at SFO while stamping my passport. I really never will live this one down!

Demis Hassabis - @demishassabis
It was a great honour to write an introduction to 'Game Changer', the new book by @gmmds, @NatashaRegan123. The #AlphaZero project has really rekindled my passion for chess and I hope this book does the same for others.

The New Wizard

Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan worked with the phenomena that is *AlphaZero* ahead of their new book, *Game Changer*. Here they share some of their experiences

One of the most enjoyable aspects of working with *AlphaZero* and analysing its games has been the dual feeling of familiarity and originality. Much of *AlphaZero*'s play echoes the best practices built up in hundreds of years of human play, but *AlphaZero* often implements these ideas with a special twist. A fundament of *AlphaZero*'s play is a keen awareness of the relative safety of both kings. *AlphaZero* tries – with great success in the match against *Stockfish* – to manoeuvre its opponent into a situation in which the opponent's king is exposed while *AlphaZero*'s own king is completely safe, often at the cost of the sacrifice of a couple of pawns.

One way in which *AlphaZero* achieves this goal is via what we have called 'The March of the Rook's pawn', in which typically *AlphaZero* launches its h-pawn against the opponent's kingside, aiming to push it all the way to h6 (as White). Whether this advance is met with ...g6 or ...gxh6, Black's kingside is weakened and offers less of a haven for the king. In our book we also look extensively at games in which *Stockfish* tries to block the h-pawn at an earlier stage with ...h5 or ...h6: *AlphaZero* has a plan for that too.

AlphaZero's play has a human-like rhythm and purpose to it, so it's not surprising that some of *AlphaZero*'s games have striking parallels with great human games of the past. One set of games we show in our book takes place in the French Winawer in which *AlphaZero*'s play echoes a classic game of Garry Kasparov's in a quite uncanny way, as the following extracts from our book show.

Let's start by refreshing our memory of Garry's game:

Historical Parallel: Kasparov's system against the French Winawer

In the 1990's the great Garry Kasparov developed a dangerous system against the French Winawer system (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4). In this system, Black gives up the dark-squared bishop at an early stage to create and fix pawn weaknesses in White's position (4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3), which can then be attacked with minor pieces and the black queen. Garry's concept for White was to create weaknesses on the other side by pushing the h-pawn to h6 to expose dark-squared weaknesses there, willing even to sacrifice his central pawn chain to expose additional dark squares. The following phenomenal game against Predrag Nikolic is a typical example:

G.Kasparov-P.Nikolic
Paris (rapid) 1994
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♕g4 ♔f8 8 h4

8...♕c7 9 ♕d1

White retreats the queen to deal with the threat of ...cxd4 and then ...♕c3+, winning the rook on a1. Black takes the opportunity to nick the d-pawn, but this merely signals the start of a powerful assault.

9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕c3+ 11 ♗d2 ♕xd4 12 ♘f3 ♕e4+ 13 ♗e2 ♘bc6 14 h5 ♘xe5 15 h6

Black's capture of White's central d4- and e5-pawns has cleared the a1-h8 diagonal for White's dark-squared bishop and now Kasparov uses his h-pawn to loosen things up even further.

15...gxh6 16 ♗xh6+ ♔g8 17 ♖b1 ♘7g6 18 ♖b4

Fantastic mobility of the white rooks. Everything is going to participate in the attack.

18...♘xf3+ 19 gxf3 ♕e5 20 f4 ♕c3+ 21 ♔f1 f5 22 ♖b3 ♕f6 23 c4 b6 24 cxd5 ♗b7 25 ♖d3 ♖e8 26 ♖g1 b5 27 dxe6 ♖xe6 28 ♖d8+ ♔f7 29 ♖d7+ ♖e7 30 ♖xb7 1-0

A wonderful game that contains the features that we admired in *AlphaZero*'s games: the rapid advance of the rook's pawn, disregard for material equality, sacrificing for open lines and extreme mobility of the pieces.

Having seen Kasparov's game, it was striking to see this game of *AlphaZero*'s when forced to open 1 e4 and play against the French Winawer. There is a sense of great minds thinking alike.

The game is from a series in which *AlphaZero*'s and *Stockfish*'s first two moves were pre-specified. After that, they were on their own!

"Attaquer comme Kasparov!"

A Kasparov-style attack against the French Winawer!

Game themes:

1. Using a rook's pawn to weaken the opponent's king's position (7 h4, 8 h5, 15 h6) As a note on the opening, *AlphaZero*'s preferred way to meet the French Winawer is not the sharp 7 ♕g4 Poisoned Pawn variation – as Kasparov played – but the more positional 7 h4, directly implementing *AlphaZero*'s chosen positional goal: the weakening of the black kingside.

The authors of Game Changer, *Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan. They analyse* AlphaZero's *amazing play and have also released some videos on the YouTube channel Game Changer.*

AlphaZero-Stockfish 8
London 2018
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 ♘e7 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 h4 ♕c7 8 h5 cxd4 9 cxd4 ♕c3+ 10 ♗d2 ♕xd4 11 ♘f3 ♕e4+ 12 ♗e2 ♘f5 13 ♖b1

A novelty in this position: 13 ♔f1 (looking for ♗d3, targeting the exposed black queen) is the main move. In response, Black has been trying 13...b6 to counter 14 ♗d3 with 14...♗a6. *AlphaZero* avoids this defence by inserting 13 ♖b1 first (threatening ♖b4) and drawing out 13...♘c6. Only then does it play 14 ♔f1 as ...b6 and ...♗a6 is no longer a threat. There is the little matter of the pawn on e5 though...

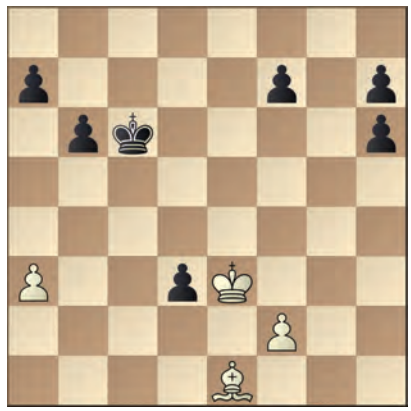
13...♘c6 14 ♔f1 ♘xe5 15 h6 gxh6

AlphaZero has devised an identical attacking scheme to Kasparov's. Just like Kasparov, *AlphaZero* follows up by mobilising its major pieces. *Stockfish* defends by provoking a crisis, using its temporary activity to interfere with the stability of White's pieces.

16 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♗d3 ♖g8 18 ♖h5 ♕g7 19 ♕f3 ♘d4 20 ♕h3 e5 21 ♕h2 e4 22 c3 exd3 23 cxd4 b6 24 ♖xd5 ♗e6 25 ♖d6 ♕g4 26 ♔g1 ♕e2 27 d5

It looks winning for White, but *Stockfish* has planned an astounding resource, sacrificing a piece to reach an equal endgame a piece down.

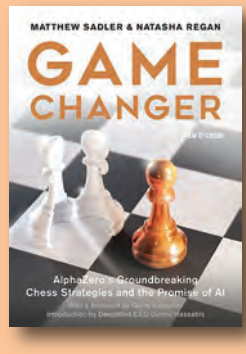
27....♗h3 28 ♖e1 ♖xg2+ 29 ♕xg2 ♕xe1+ 30 ♗xe1 ♗xg2 31 ♔xg2 ♖c8 32 ♖c6 ♖xc6 33 dxc6 ♔d8 34 ♔f3 ♔c7 35 ♔e3 ♔xc6



Black is just in time to win the bishop for its queenside pawns and head back before White can capture all of Black's kingside pawns.

36 ♗b4 ♔b5 37 ♔xd3 ♔a4 38 ♔e4 b5 39 ♗f8 a5 40 ♔f5 b4 41 axb4 axb4 42 ♗xh6 ♔a3 43 ♗f8 ♔b3 44 ♔g5 ♔a4 45 ♗g7 ♔a3 46 ♗f8 ♔a4 47 ♗g7 ♔a3 48 f4 b3 49 f5 b2 50 ♗xb2+ ♔xb2 51 ♔h6 ♔c3 52 f6 ♔d4 53 ♔g7 h5 54 ♔xf7 h4 55 ♔g6 h3 56 ♔g5 h2 57 f7 h1♕ 58 f8♕ and the game was soon drawn.

We hope this little taster of the book interests and intrigues you. In it we examine many more themes and strategies from *AlphaZero*'s play, explained through some fantastic annotated games. We also take a deep look at *AlphaZero*'s opening play and explain how A*lphaZero* thinks, which provides fascinating insights into its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of chess engines like *Stockfish*. Last, but not least, there is an interview with former top chess junior and CEO of DeepMind Demis Hassabis, who explains the journey to *AlphaZero* and what the future holds from here on.



Published by New in Chess, *Game Changer: AlphaZero's Groundbreaking Chess Strategies and the Promise of AI* is available from Chess & Bridge for the special price of £17.95 for Subscribers to *CHESS* until March 31st.

Attack and Combine: Kurt Richter (1900-1969)

Craig Pritchett takes an in-depth look at Alan McGowan's recently published labour of love on Kurt Richter, a quite brilliant attacking player and writer

In the final chapter of Tim Harding's most recent work on chess history, *British Chess Literature to 1914* (McFarland, 2018), the author provides tips to budding chess historians, especially those who may have done serious in-depth research. These include a warning to avoid "two great dangers": either "rushing into print or "procrastinating, hoarding, and failing to produce any output".

I am glad to say that Alan McGowan, Chess Scotland's historian, at length managed to negotiate especially the latter danger and can unhesitatingly commend his own first book, *Kurt Richter* (also McFarland, 2018), a work that has been an unusually lengthy three-four decades in the making. Sub-titled *A Chess Biography with 499 Games*, the book provides a fine tribute to one of Germany's best players of the early to mid 20th century.

Richter's chess has been close to McGowan's heart since he first picked up an old book by Árpád Földeák, *Chess Olympiads* (Corvina, 1966), which he found in his Queen's Park (Glasgow) school library around 1970. He reveals that he was captivated by its "wonderful" games selection and was especially struck by its inclusion of a number of "stunning wins" by Richter.

Of course, at this point, the young McGowan had no idea that he would eventually publish a book on his early chess hero... nearly 50 years hence, in 2018! However, his fascination with his subject grew as he began to come across further Richter games and, tipped off by a German correspondence opponent, eventually obtained a copy of "the 1961 edition of Brinckmann's, *Kurt Richter's beste Partien*".

In 1978, Rudolf Teschner (1922-2006), editor of the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, then put him in touch with the chess player's brother, Gerhard Richter (1903-1997), whose generous help kick-started a huge project. Since then McGowan has, through trips to Germany, newspaper and magazine articles, photos, interviews and innumerable international contacts, amassed vastly more knowledge about Kurt Richter than anyone.

So what lay at the heart of such lifelong devotion by the author to a player, who most of us, certainly in the English-speaking world, know little about other than through the association of his name with the Richter-Rauzer variation in the Sicilian Defence and the Richter-Veresov Opening? Reel back to Földeák and one of those 'stunning wins' that so captured a young teenager's fancy.

Richter had an imaginative, often quite ferocious combinational attacking style, which led to his enduring nickname, the 'executioner' of Berlin (*Scharfrichter* in German is an old term for exactly that). In one of the early games that featured in Földeák's book, Richter swiftly mated an opponent who completely missed the kind of explosive sacrificial knockout blow for which he was already developing a firm reputation.

K.Richter-L.Abramavicius
Hamburg Olympiad 1930
French Defence

1 d4 d5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♗g5 e6 4 e4 dxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♗e7 6 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 8 ♗d3

Alekhine considered the gambit offered in this game as "undoubtedly correct". Richter later turned to the less turbulent and certainly no less-promising alternative 8 ♕d2.

8...0-0 9 ♕e2 c5 10 0-0-0 cxd4 11 g4

11...g6

Although a pawn up, Black's somewhat backward development, still loose d-pawn and defensive stance on the kingside offer White compensation. Richter liked to play such complex and unbalanced gambits, and put trust in his attacking flair.

12 h4 ♗g7 13 h5 ♖e8 14 hxg6 hxg6 15 g5 e5 16 ♖h4 ♘f8 17 ♖dh1 ♗f5 18 ♕f1!?

This move springs a nasty trap that an unsuspecting Black promptly falls into. Objectively, however, White may have achieved more by pursuing more positionally grounded light-square manoeuvres (and retaining ♘f6+ options), such as after 18 ♗b5, and if 18...♗d7?! (18...♗xe4!? 19 ♕xe4 ♖e6 20 ♗c4 may improve, but is still very comfortable for White) 19 ♘fd2 ♗xb5 20 ♕xb5 ♘e6?! 21 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 22 gxf6 ♕xf6 23 ♘e4 ♕g7 24 ♖h7, and wins.

18...♖c8??

Now the roof really does fall in. White has no clear breakthrough on the h-file, after the much better 18...♗xe4! 19 ♗xe4 ♘e6, and if 20 ♕h3 ♔f8 21 ♖h8+ ♔e7, when Black's king escapes. The rest is mayhem.

19 ♖h8+ ♗xh8 20 ♖xh8+ ♔xh8 21 ♕h1+ ♘h7 22 ♘f6

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22...♔g7

Black must have been wondering, 'What just happened?'. He is, of course, also quite lost, after 22...♕xf6 23 gxf6 ♗xd3 (or if 23...♔g8 24 ♗xf5) 24 ♕h6 ♖xc2+ 25 ♔d1 ♖g8 26 ♘g5, and mates.

23 ♕h6+ 1-0

Richter was 29 when he played this game and not yet widely-known internationally. The average age of the strongest players tended to be much higher in the early 20th century than nowadays. There were far fewer opportunities to play international chess, far less if any real focus on developing juniors. Richter, twice Berlin Champion in 1922 and 1923, had, however, already made a prominent name for himself in German chess circles throughout the 1920s, as a player and writer.

World War One (1914-1918) had, of course, been a wholly baleful contributory factor, a thoroughgoing European catastrophe, in which chess and all otherwise 'normal' life took a wholly back seat. Richter lost his father early on in that conflict. This caused the remaining family such severe economic hardship, according to his younger brother Gerhard, that it so weakened Kurt's physical development that he suffered from ongoing poor health for the rest of his life.

The often ailing adolescent then had to endure the continuing difficulties of the immediate post-war years: regime collapse, plummeting economic output, catastrophic German hyper-inflation and the rise of political extremes of both right and left, including Hitler's egregious Nazis. During all this, Richter managed to hold down a fairly steady insurance job from 1917-1927, before moving full-time into the world of chess editorship and writing.

In 1928, Richter, who had first gained the coveted (German) 'Master' title and then won a minor international event, earlier that year, was invited to play in his first strong 'International Masters Tournament', which was hosted in his home town, Berlin. Germany's top player, Efim Boguljubow, the favourite, finished first (on 8½/11), ahead of Friedrich Sämisch (8), with Richter in a middling four-way tie for fifth place, on 5½ points.

Although this was perhaps no more than a creditable début for the international newcomer at such a high level, the sage Dr. Tartakower nevertheless considered that the still young Richter managed to play "the most beautiful" game of the tournament: one that showed "power, energy and – perhaps most important! – harmony in carrying out the struggle".

K.Richter-C.Ahues
Berlin 1928
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 d4 0-0!?

After the more usual 6...exd4 Richter frequently played the line 7 e5 ♘e4 8 ♖e1 ♘c5 9 ♗xc6 dxc6 10 ♘xd4 with success.

7 d5 ♘b8 8 ♕e2 d6 9 h3 ♔h8!?

Mikhail Chigorin, one of the great masters in the imaginative handling of cramped positions, played differently: 9...♘bd7 10 c4 b5! 11 ♗c2 bxc4 12 ♘a3 ♘b6 13 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 14 ♕xc4 a5 15 ♕c3 ♗d7 16 ♗e3 ♕b8 17 ♖fc1 ♖c8 18 ♕a3 ♗f8 19 ♘d2 c6!, with active counterplay and an eventual win in Barry-Chigorin, Cambridge Springs 1904. Contrast this with Ahues's play and you will soon grasp that Black pays dearly for his signal failure throughout to engage his queenside forces in the main struggle on the kingside.

10 c4 ♘g8 11 ♘h2 f5 12 f4 exf4 13 ♗xf4 fxe4 14 ♘c3 ♘f6 15 g4 ♘bd7 16 ♗c2 ♘c5 17 ♖ae1 a5 18 ♗d2

18...♗d7?

With his queen's rook completely out of play and no clear counterplay, Black simply drifts. Perhaps it was time for radical kingside measures, such as after 18...♖e8!?, and if 19 g5!? ♗xh3 20 gxf6 ♗xf6, which might at least put up more of a fight.

19 g5 ♘g8?! 20 ♘xe4

Now, however, White has a more or less clear run on the kingside and Black can hardly expect to survive.

20...♕e8 21 ♘xc5 dxc5 22 ♖xf8 ♗xf8 23 ♕f3 ♘e7 24 h4 ♔g8 25 h5 ♕d8

After 25...♖a6 26 ♗c3, and if 26...a4 27 ♘g4, White's powerfully placed bishops and control of virtually all space from the e- to the h-file signal an alarming variety of lethal breakthrough possibilities at h6, g6 and f7

26 g6 ♘c8 27 ♘g4 ♘d6

The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in January

1	=	Reti Opening	*180 games*
2	⇧	Caro-Kann Defence	*129 games*
3	⇩	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	*106 games*
4	=	King's Indian Defence	*102 games*
5	⇧	Nimzo-Indian Defence	*84 games*
6	⇧	Queen's Gambit Declined	*80 games*
7	⇩	Sicilian Najdorf	*74 games*
8	⇩	Slav Defence	*69 games*
9	⇩	1 d4 d5 sidelines	*65 games*
10	⇩	English, 1...e5	*60 games*
11	⇧	English, 1...♘f6	*58 games*
12	⇧	Ruy Lopez Berlin	*53 games*
13	⇩	English 1...c5	*51 games*
14	⇩	Sicilian 2 ♘f3 sidelines	*50 games*
15	⇧	Sicilian Kan	*50 games*
16	⇩	Grünfeld Classical var.	*49 games*
17	⇩	Sicilian 2 ♘f3 d6 sidelines	*48 games*
18	⇧	Petroff 3 Nxe5 var.	*46 games*
19	⇩	Giuoco Piano	*50 games*
20	⇧	Sicilian Taimanov	*44 games*

2,458 games played between 1-31 January where both players were rated over 2400 Elo

Source: TWIC. Compiled by *HIARCS 14.*

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HIARCS Chess Explorer - hiarcs.com
and *The Week in Chess* -- theweekinchess.com

28 ♘h6+!

White had other wins but chooses perhaps the prettiest – with the presumed co-operation of a sporting opponent who by now must, of course, have expected the worst.

28...♔h8

Or if 28...gxh6 29 gxh7+ ♔h8 30 ♗c3+ ♗g7 31 ♖e8+!! ♕xe8 (forced, or else 32 ♕f8 mate) 32 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 33 ♕c3+, and mate follows.

29 ♕f7! ♘xf7 30 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 31 gxh7+ ♔xf7 32 ♖f1+ ♗f5 33 ♖xf5+ ♔e8 34 ♖e5+ ♔f7 35 ♗g6+ ♔f6 36 ♖e6# 1-0

Moving into the 1930s, Richter's play began to develop apace and McGowan considers that between 1936 and 1939, he was probably at his "creative best". Throughout these years, however, he could never quite reach the very top. Twice world championship challenger, Bogoljubow, remained clear German number one in that decade, challenged latterly, following the 1938 German-Austrian Anschluβ, only by the promising young Austrian, Erich Eliskases.

Looking back, it is possible to recognise a number of reasons for this. Due to his health problems, Richter's stamina was always in doubt, while others detected a certain deficiency in his ultimate will to achieve such high playing goals. By temperament, Richter preferred to lead a retiring and quiet life. He was indeed probably always most suited to remaining primarily a professional chess editor, author, communicator and teacher rather than player.

Richter nevertheless also had over-the-board ambition and he registered a number of significant successes in these years, including a German championship title (1935), outright first or shared first places in five Berlin championships (1929-1938) and a first-class 12/18 on top board for Germany (in Bogoljubow's absence) in the 'unofficial' Munich Olympiad (1936). At Bad Nauheim (1935), he proved his mettle in a feisty battle against Eliskases, then only 22 years old, but already considered a world-class prospect.

K.Richter-E.Eliskases
Bad Nauheim 1935
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 d5!?

A slightly offbeat favourite of Richter's at the time, though objectively more simply tactical in nature (thereby suiting his combative/combinative style) than the more theoretically challenging main lines, arising after 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5.

7...bxa4 8 dxc6 d6 9 ♖e1 ♘c5

Black can also play 9...♘f6, as in Richter-Vidmar, Stuttgart 1939, which continued in Black's favour: 10 ♗g5 ♗e7 11 c4 0-0 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘c3 a3 14 b4 ♗e6 15 ♘d5 ♗xd5 16 ♕xd5 e4! 17 ♘d4 ♖e8 18 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♕e8 20 ♖e1 ♕xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♗xd4 22 ♖xd4 ♖b8 23 ♔f1 ♖xb4, and White was in serious trouble.

10 ♗e3 ♘e6 11 c4 ♗e7 12 ♘c3 0-0 13 c5 f5?!

This is quite loose, though Black should have aimed to follow it up with a quick ...f4, to force White's bishop to retreat and limit White's piece activity while still possible.

Black's best move is perhaps the more solid ...f6, perhaps preceded by 13...a3, so that following any capture on d6, Black can recapture with queen or bishop.

14 ♕d5 ♔h8?! 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 ♖ad1 ♖b8?! 17 ♘xe5!

Richter, who believed that any combination that "offers 75% winning and 25% losing chances" ought never be "labelled incorrect", rarely drew back from any unbalancing sacrifice. This one is 100% correct! White must surely win, after 17...dxe5? 18 ♕xe5 ♕c7 19 ♕xc7 ♘xc7 20 ♗f4 ♗f6 (not 20...♖d8? 21 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 22 ♗xc7) 21 ♗xc7 ♖xb2 22 ♘xa4, and if 22...♖xa2 23 ♗d6 ♖g8 24 ♘b6 ♖c2 25 c7 with a highly likely promotable c-pawn.

17...f4 18 ♗a7 ♖a8 19 c7 ♘xc7 20 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 21 ♕xf7 ♗e6 22 ♖xe6 ♘xe6 23 ♕xe6 ♖xa7 24 ♘d5

Following a quasi-forced sequence, White's pieces dominate. Black might still defend, but his rickety pawns, on f4, a4 and a6, offer ripe targets and White's powerful knight on d5 makes it difficult for Black's pieces to co-ordinate.

24...♗f8 25 ♖c1 ♕d7 26 ♕e4 ♖b7 27 ♕xf4 ♕e8

28 h3?!

A slip: White should have played 28 ♕d2 immediately. Now Black might have safely played 28...♖xb2, and if 29 ♘c7 ♕e7 30 ♘e6 ♖b8 (a resource perhaps underestimated by both players), after which, with only one remaining white queenside pawn, Black has better drawing chances than in the remaining technical phase, in which White gradually wins without difficulty.

28...♖f7?! 29 ♕d2 ♕e5 30 ♖e1 ♕f5 31 ♕d4 h5 32 ♖e8 ♔h7 33 g4 hxg4 34 hxg4 ♕b1+ 35 ♔g2 ♕c1 36 ♕e4+ g6 37 ♖e6 ♕g5 38 ♔g3 ♗g7 39 f4 ♕h6 40 g5 ♕h5 41 ♖e7 ♖xe7 42 ♕xe7 ♔h8 43 ♕e8+ ♔h7 44 ♘e7 1-0

Then came 1939 and another horrendous disruption that this time eventually ended any remaining hopes that Richter's playing achievements might be extended much beyond his early forties. World War Two (1939-1945) was yet another catastrophe that killed stone dead all hope of any significant international chess beyond purely skeletal national individual and club competition everywhere for almost a decade.

It is perhaps a wonder that the physically weak Richter survived, especially in the later war years as it became ever clearer that a completely unhinged Hitler was determined to prolong the war until the very collapse of Berlin, to the point of Germany's uttermost

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ruin and much additional and avoidable Allied agony. A vain attempt to buy time to save his skin or indulge in some fantastical blood redemption for the regime's degeneracy and very long list of despicable war crimes?

At this point, it should be said that there is no evidence that Richter was ever an ideologically convinced Nazi, far less ever a Party member or even especially interested in politics. This cannot be said, alas, for all German chess players and organisers, some of whom are named in this book. Richter's was a scarred generation and to this day many Germans still struggle to come to terms with this awful period in their history and how it all happened.

In chess, if your German is up to it, take a look at an article, dated 26th July 2018, in the news archive at de.chessbase.com. This moving piece relates the history of the purging of six leading Jewish members of the Hamburg Chess Club (the main organiser of the 1930 Hamburg Olympiad), in the year following the passage of the Nazi Government's 1933 racial purity laws and explains why it took more than 80 years for the club to unveil a commemorative plaque in long-suppressed but heartfelt sorrow and remembrance.

Such public purges in all walks of life were required by the Nazis and commonplace. All overt opposition to the regime and its increasing grip on all aspects of ordinary life invited swift, frequently brutal, extra-legal retribution. You either fled the country, as did many, including not just Jews but many implacable anti-Nazis, or you kept your head down, in no doubt large, but unknowable numbers, often in despair and fearful anxiety.

To its credit, FIDE responded to the Nazi race laws by expelling the racially 'purified' (and renamed) 'Greater German Chess Federation' from its membership. Moreover FIDE's member federations were only allowed to take part in the 'unofficial' 1936 Munich Olympiad (there were some boycotts), on the express agreement by the Germans that they would accept Jews in any visiting foreign team, including second-placed Poland, which edged out a 'purified' Germany into third place.

We don't know how any of this really played out in Richter's mind. International relations increasingly worsened, and in 1938, FIDE, perhaps less creditably, readmitted a much enlarged and more powerful Greater Germany to its membership. On the actual outbreak of war, Richter was certainly employed (he would have had no 'real' choice), by the "state organization, *Kraft durch Freude* ('Strength through Joy'), whose remit was to emphasise the advantages of the Nazi Party system in all areas of life."

This employment involved Richter "heavily [...] in chess promotional work". He continued to exercise his editorial responsibilities, wrote popular chess books, gave talks and simultaneous displays, and played in a number of national and limited international tournaments. All of these activities, which he engaged in with other German masters, were designed to maintain domestic morale, including in the military, and demonstrate Nazi civic strength and values, both at home and for an international audience.

Kurt Richter (left) with fellow Berliner Ludwig Rellstab in action from the Germany-Hungary match, played in Karlsbad, 1939. Photograph courtesy of Gerhard Richter and Alan McGowan.

The last and strongest of these limited international tournaments, held at Munich (1942), was somewhat grandiosely billed as a 'European Championship'. Although it assembled a very fine field, it could, of course, only draw on entrants from Greater Germany and its European allies, 'neutrals' or occupied territories. World champion, Alexander Alekhine (8½/11) and Paul Keres (7½) finished first and second, ahead of Bogoljubow, Richter and Foltys (tied for third on 7 points).

Richter's fellow Berliner, Ludwig Rellstab (1904-1983), was among the also-rans in this event. Rellstab, too, survived the war and along with Richter, both 'old' masters were awarded the IM title by FIDE in 1950. Many older readers will recall that a by then quite 'senior' Rellstab won the Hastings Challengers (1972-73), qualifying for the 1973-74 Hastings International, in which, while age was against him, he managed to win against a young Tony Miles.

According to McGowan, Rellstab once "humorously observed" that Richter's "tragedy ... is that he has to go for bad moves because he never wants to play the same way and has already tried all the good variations", but, he acknowledged, Richter's "great inventiveness often makes up for this and [...] despite his outrageously incorrect style [...] he often manages to confuse his opponents, conjure up the most incredible adventures from a completely unsatisfactory set-up and clinch [...] victory".

While certainly tongue in cheek, this just about sums up the course of their extraordinary encounter at Munich.

K.Richter-L.Rellstab
Munich 1942
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗g5 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 d6 5 e4 ♘bd7 6 f4 0-0 7 g4?!

"Even for a Richter... far too energetic" (Alekhine).

7...c5 8 d5 ♕a5 9 ♗d3 ♘xg4!

Oops! The threat of ...♗xc3+ secures a pawn and a clear advantage.

10 ♕d2 e5?!

This unforced, self-blocking move, however, unnecessarily hems in Black's own dark-squared bishop and allows White to make a reasonable gambit out of his chaotic start. Black retains the better chances, after 10...♖e8, intending an eventual line-opening

...e6, with Black's dark-squared bishop exerting great force on its long diagonal.

11 f5 f6 12 h3 ♘f2 13 ♕xf2 fxg5 14 ♘f3 gxf5?

And this lazy capture invites some further dangerous line-opening by White that could have been averted by playing 14...h6! (Richter and Barcza).

15 ♘xg5 fxe4 16 ♕h4 ♘f6 17 ♘gxe4 ♘xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗f5 19 0-0

White now clearly stands well. After exchanging light-squared bishops, White's powerful knight on e4 completely dominates Black's dark-squared bishop, while Black's forces generally lack space.

19...♗xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♖xf1+ 21 ♖xf1 ♕d8 22 ♕h5 ♕e7 23 ♘g5 ♗f6

Black now runs into a crushing temporary sacrifice. After the otherwise forced 23...h6, however, White plays 24 ♘e6, threatening ♔h1, followed by ♖g1, winning quickly.

24 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 25 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 26 ♘e6+ ♔e8 27 ♕g8+ ♔e7

Black loses a knight and can only (rather doubtfully) hope that his queen might find a way to give perpetual check. White can probably also thread his way to a win, after 27...♔d7 28 ♕xa8 ♕g6+ 29 ♔h2 ♕c2+ 30 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 31 ♔h4, and if 31...♕xc4+ 32 ♔g5 ♕c1+ (or 32...♕xd5 33 ♕d8+ ♔c6 34 ♔f6) 33 ♔g6 ♕c2+ 34 ♔h6 ♕d2+ 35 ♘g5 ♕xd5 36 ♕xa7.

28 ♕xa8 ♕g6+ 29 ♔h2 ♕c2+ 30 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 31 ♔h4 ♕e4+

Alternatively, if 31...♕xc4+ 32 ♔g5 ♕c1+ (or 32...♕xd5 33 ♕d8+ ♔xe6 34 ♕e8 mate) 33 ♔g6 ♕c2+ 34 ♔h6 ♕d2+ 35 ♔h7 ♕d3+ 36 ♔g8 ♕xd5 37 ♕f8+ ♔d7 (or 37...♔xe6 38 ♕f7 mate) 38 ♕f7+ ♔c6 39 ♘d8+, and wins.

32 ♔g5 ♕g2+ 33 ♔h6 ♕xh3+ 34 ♔g6 ♕d3+ 35 ♔g7 ♕g3+ 36 ♔h8 ♕h4+ 37 ♔g8 ♕g4+ 38 ♘g7 ♔f6 39 ♕d8+ 1-0

During the winter months of 1942-43, the war began to turn decisively against Germany and the regime's chess effort, as with much else in civilian life, began to deteriorate sharply. Chess activity significantly diminished and McGowan's book goes largely silent about Richter's fortunes from 1943 until the end of the war other than to note that at its end, he appears to have spent some time in a Soviet-controlled prison camp.

Richter survived that latter, grim experience, though perhaps only sustained by the moral support of a fellow prisoner and chess player, August Babel (1892-1978), who "stated that Richter – like many great thinkers and artists not a very practical person – was [...] completely broken mentally". He was, however, perhaps even more fortunate simply to have "survived the Nazi era uncompromised and untainted" and was soon permitted to resume his chess activities in the immediate post-war years.

Richter's best playing years were, however, by then truly over, although he still won a final Berlin Championship (1948), and competed in that event on and off until 1964 and in other German club, individual and team events into the 1960s. Richter's poor health sadly persisted and, in 1952, shortly after the death of his mother, with whom he had shared the family home, he suffered a heart attack.

To add to these misfortunes, Richter's life was also soon to be plagued again by politics. While he actually lived most of his life in the chess clubs and cafes of West Berlin, his home was in East Berlin, on the 'wrong' side of the Berlin Wall, when it came to be built in 1961. As an East Berliner, Richter could no longer freely visit his West Berlin chess playing haunts and while he was largely able to continue his chess writing across the political divide, he felt personally isolated.

On Richter's death, there were many warm international as well as purely German tributes. Harry Golombek, in the *British Chess Magazine*, and BH Wood, in *CHESS*, had long been firm British admirers. Lothar Schmid spoke of him as "my great teacher". Of Richter's columns in *Deutsche Schachblätter* and *Schach*, Paul Keres recalled that he "was constantly amazed at the way [Richter] could make the most difficult chess material accessible [...] to everyone in a humorous and entertaining way".

Keres also contributed a thoughtful piece on Richter's playing style and openings to the book, *Schönheit der Kombinationen*, (Sportverlag Berlin, 1972), a commemorative selection of Richter's columns in *Schach*, later published in English, with a foreword by Harry Golombek, with the title, *Chess Combination as a Fine Art* (Pitman, 1976). McGowan suggests that this book, apparently Richter's only work translated into English, "is a wonderful introduction to Richter's entertaining writing".

Both Keres and Alekhine before him certainly had a soft spot for Richter's playful, combinative chess, which the Swiss master, Fritz Gygli, perhaps best summed up in the words: "Richter is no contender for the world championship [but] with his brilliant games he gives at least as much pleasure as any of them". While he never scaled the topmost heights, Richter could nevertheless sting the mighty, as in his following fine win, which has been republished many a time into the 21st century.

P.Keres-K.Richter
Munich 1942
English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗b4 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4 g5!?

A playable, if double-edged alternative to the more usual 7...♗xc3+ 8 bxc3, and now either 8...0-0 or 8...d6, which provokes Keres's ambition on his 11th move.

8 ♗g3 d6 9 ♖c1 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 ♗f5 11 h4!?

11...♔d7!!?

"!!" – Alekhine. This brilliantly inspired, if highly unconventional retort to White's

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perhaps overly sharp lunge with his h-pawn, has long been admired, including by Mark Dvoretsky, in his *School of Excellence 4 Opening Developments* (Olms, 2003), as Black's "best" solution to the problem of completing his development. It is nevertheless possible that it may not be as good as the prosaic but solid 11...♖g8 12 hxg5 hxg5, after which Black can hope to capitalise on his slightly more advanced development to get in ...♕e7, followed eventually by ...0-0-0, with little to worry about.

12 ♖d1

Or if 12 ♗e5?! ♗c5 13 ♗xf6 ♗xd4 14 ♗xd8 ♖axd8, and Black has an excellent bishop-pair.

12...♘e4

13 ♕e5?!

The critical move must surely be 13 c5!, an engine discovery that went unmentioned at the time but looks quite promising for White, as shown by:

a) 13...♗xc5 14 ♕d5 ♘xg3 15 fxg3, and White wins one of Black's bishops (even after 15...♗c2 16 ♖d2).

b) 13...♗xc3+ 14 bxc3, and after either 14...♖e8 or14...♘xg3, White's attack continues with 15 cxd6!.

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c) 13...♘xg3 14 ♕xb4 ♘xh1 15 cxd6!, with an almost certainly winning advantage, if still complex, such as after 15...♔c8 16 dxc7 ♕xc7 17 ♘d5 ♕c2 (or if 17...a5 18 ♕d4) 18 ♕d6 b6 19 ♘e7+ ♔b7 20 ♕d5+.

13...♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♘xg3 15 fxg3 ♗g6 16 hxg5

Perhaps Keres was initially relying on 16 c5, but it is now far from clear whether White obtains full compensation for his pawn, after 16...♕e7 17 ♕d4 ♖he8, and if 18 cxd6 cxd6 19 hxg5 hxg5 20 ♕a4+ ♔d8 21 ♕b4 ♔c7 22 ♕c4+ ♔b8 23 ♕b4 ♖d8.

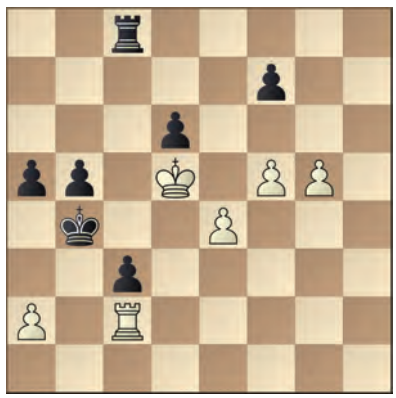
16...♕xg5 17 ♕f4 ♖ae8 18 ♖d5 ♕xf4 19 gxf4 b6 20 ♔f2 h5 21 e3 h4 22 ♖g5 ♗e4 23 ♗e2

Black has retained the critical defensive integrity of his c- and d-pawns and now has a well-centralised king, the much better queenside pawns, and an endgame edge. Richter plans to exchange a pair of rooks and, via c6 and c5, rush his king into an attack against White's vulnerable a- and c-pawns. After 23 ♖g4 ♖h5, Black's rook rushes to the queenside, gaining White's a-pawn; or if 23 a4 a5 24 ♖g4 ♗c6, and Black's bishop makes the crucial capture on a4.

23...♖eg8 24 ♗g4+ ♔c6 25 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 26 ♖xh4 ♔c5 27 ♗f3 ♗xf3 28 ♔xf3 ♔xc4 29 ♖h7 ♖f8

Black's more active king and queenside pawns certainly seem more threatening. but all is not yet lost for White as he can rapidly advance his own kingside pawns.

30 g4 ♔xc3 31 ♔e4 c5 32 ♔d5 c4 33 e4 ♔b4 34 g5 c3 35 ♖h2 ♖c8 36 ♖c2 b5 37 f5 a5



38 ♔xd6?

Alekhine correctly noted that 38 ♔d4!, and if 38...a4 39 ♔d3! "had to be played". White then holds after 39...♔a3 40 ♖xc3+ ♖xc3+ 41 ♔xc3 b4+ 42 ♔d4 b3 43 axb3 axb3 44 g6, whereas now it seems that Black wins by one tempo.

38...♔c4 39 e5 b4 40 ♔d7

Or if 40 e6 fxe6 41 fxe6 a4 42 e7 b3 43 axb3+ axb3 44 ♖f2 ♖e8!, so that after either 45 ♖f8 or 45 ♔d7, Black can play 45...♖xe7!, followed by the advance of his two mighty pawns on the sixth rank.

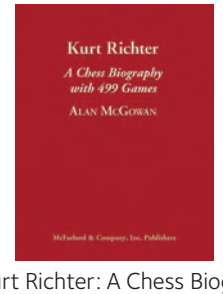
40...♖a8 41 e6 fxe6 42 f6 a4 43 f7 b3 44 axb3+ axb3 45 ♖xc3+ ♔xc3 46 g6 b2 47 g7 b1♕ 48 f8♕ ♕b7+ 49 ♔xe6 ♖a6+ 50 ♔f5 ♕d7+ 51 ♔f4 ♖a4+ 52 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 53 ♕f3 ♖a8 54 g8♕ ♖xg8+ 55 ♔h2 ♖h8+ 56 ♔g1 ♖g8+ 57 ♔h2 ♔c2 58 ♕c6+ ♔d1 59 ♕f3+ ♕e2+ 0-1

I am, of course, indebted to McGowan's book, including the quotations that I have drawn from it, for this brief Cook's tour of Kurt Richter's chess life and often turbulent times. The book, of course, delves very much deeper. In its 370 large, packed pages, this robust McFarland hardback conveys its narrative directly, contains innumerable photos and features many extensive game annotations drawn mainly from contemporary sources that still speak to us freshly.

Players such as Alekhine, Keres and Richter aspired to the highest chess standards, worked hard and communicated their understanding superbly both in words and analyses. While the information age has greatly deepened our knowledge since those players' heydays, the essential chess truths have changed much less than you might imagine. Quite apart from the book's intrinsic historical merit, if you study much of the book's purely chess material with care, you are likely to improve your own practice.

For the openings aficionado, McGowan also includes two expansive appendices on Richter's openings with White and Black. He establishes Richter's credentials to naming rights in the Richter-Rauzer Variation and Richter-Veresov Opening, but there is also much else here besides.

All in all, this hugely informative, instructive and entertaining book is a delight to dip into. A great read!



Ed. – Kurt Richter: A Chess Biography with 499 Games, *by Alan McGowan can be obtained by* CHESS *Subscribers from Chess and Bridge for £58.46 until April 30th.*

The Captain and the Chess Legend

The recent discovery of the coffin of Captain Matthew Flinders reminded Bob Jones that the great Philidor was also buried on the site of St. James's Gardens, Hampstead Road, which has been bulldozed to make way for the new HS2 train line

Euston Station was opened in 1837, making it Britain's first inter-city rail line – London to Birmingham, a journey then taking a head-spinning five and a quarter hours. So successful was it that new platforms had to be added every few years: 1846, 1863, 1873 and then in 1887 a big expansion causing it to encroach on to part of the burial ground of St. James's Church. Some headstones were removed and placed around the edge of what was to become St. James's Gardens, but little else was done to preserve what was originally there.

Today, Euston is being turned into the London terminal for the HS2 project, a mammoth undertaking which involves digging up much of the ancient remains in that area, including the removal and re-interment of 40,000 skeletons from that old graveyard. At least, much more care is being taken of the process than was the case in 1887, with archaeologists working alongside engineers.

Last month it emerged that the remains of Captain Matthew Flinders (1774-1814) had been unearthed there and were being carefully removed to a safe place, he being the man who first circumnavigated Australia and confirmed that the name Australia should supplant its former title of New Holland. Flinders was fortunate inasmuch as his coffin had a lead plaque bearing his details fixed to the lid. Few were so lucky, yet somewhere among the 40,000 others lie the remains of the 18th century's greatest chessplayer, André Danican-Philidor (1726-1795), known to us today simply as Philidor.

Born in Dreux, near Versailles, with some Scottish ancestry (Danican is derived from the name Duncan), his father, Michel Danican-Philidor III, was one of a whole tribe of that name, all musicians at the Palace of Versailles. Like J.S. Bach, he reputedly had about 20 children, and Philidor was the first son of his second or third wife (accounts vary) who was 50+ years younger than her husband. Consequently the youngster barely got to know his father or older siblings, most of whom were a generation or more older than him.

The archaeological excavation and research works at St James's Gardens, Euston, is now in its main phase and works there have been ongoing since October 2018. To date a team of over 50 archaeologists have been at work, excavating, recording and lifting the remains prior to reburial. A key finding has been the fact that none of the funerary monuments were removed from the burial ground following its closure in 1853. They were simply buried by imported material (taken from other sites of Victorian London). Over 700 monuments have been identified to date although unfortunately most were not found to be in their original location.

He was prodigiously talented at both music and chess, having been in the church choir at Versailles from the age of 6 and beating experienced adults at chess by the age of 10. The following year he composed a motet that was performed before a delighted King Louis XV. André Danican-Philidor later went on to excel at comic operas which became the talk of Paris, and the king granted him an annual pension. However, paradoxically, he was able to make as much money from his chess, if not more. In those days chess was a rich man's game and his fees for tuition, matches, simultaneous and blindfold displays around Europe could exceed his income from royalties.

This was brought home to him when, in his late teens, he travelled to Holland to assist in a concert tour promoted by the father of a 13-year-old harpsichordist called Lanza. Bad luck dogged him; the girl died, the promoter pulled out, and Philidor was stuck in Rotterdam with no money, but chess came to his rescue and he managed to eke out a living temporarily. From there he made his way to London, arriving in 1747, and was soon in company with the leading English players of the day – Sir Abraham Janssen, Philip Stamma et al, all of whom he beat with ease.

The following year he returned to Holland where, aged just 23, he settled down to write a book on chess, as a way of generating further income. With a lucidity, conciseness and assurance beyond his years, it broke new ground in the way that he explained and illustrated from model games his basic principles and how he used these in his own superior play. In short, it was understandable by the average player, who could adopt Philidor's principles in their own games. Its title was *L'Analyze des Echecs* or, in the subsequent English edition, *Analysis Of The Game of Chess*.

First of all, Philidor used his contacts to assemble a list of subscribers, whose paid upfront orders would pay for the book to be printed. He had no worries on that account, as the first person he approached was Lord Sandwich who immediately ordered 10 copies, while the next was the Duke of Cumberland who ordered 50 copies and later distributed them among his officers, and so it went on. Through his book he had reached out beyond the privileged few to everyman; chess was no longer the preserve of aristocrats and the nouveau riche. Eventually the book was to go into 100 editions in ten languages and was a true publishing phenomenon, instrumental in raising the standard of chess play throughout Western Europe.

In 1754, after a nine year absence from France, yet still only in his 20s, Philidor returned to France where he found the atmosphere now more accepting of his music for the stage, as opposed to the salon, and he enjoyed great success, eventually turning out over 20 popular comic operas. In 1760 he found true love, marrying Angelique Richer, a successful singer and musician who was beautiful, vivacious, extravert and witty – everything her husband was not.

After all, Philidor, in spite of all his brilliance, was not an instrumentalist. He didn't need to be, as it was all in his head, just as he didn't need a chess set to be able to beat the best in Europe – that also was all in his head. He was an introvert, with little humour or conversation: even his friends deemed him dull company. One gets the impression that deep down he was just a nice bloke with no side. But in spite of, or perhaps because of these differences, they were a loving, devoted couple who raised five boys and two girls.

This happy period lasted until 1771 when Philidor started revisiting London. It may have been that he had ridden the crest of the operatic wave as far as it would go, and now the Parisian public considered it passé and wanted something new, or it may have been that he wanted to reassert his dominance of the chess world, and there were promising developments afoot. Certainly he wished to liaise with his London publisher about a new, improved edition of his book, and doubtless wanted to track down old friends.

Philidor found the old Slaughter's club deserted, the new HQ being the Salopian Coffee House in Charing Cross. He was also aware of how the chess bug was spreading beyond its former confines of the upper class, partly thanks to the input of his book. This led to the creation of a new exclusive club at Parsloe's Subscription Rooms, in St. James's Street. To keep out the riff-raff it was strictly limited to 100 vetted members with an annual fee of 3 guineas. Their lists were filled with the aristocracy; knights and bishops, of course, not the king as he was going mad at the time, but also lords, dukes, the military top brass, famous writers, artists etc. They contracted Philidor to be their resident maestro each year from February to May, with rooms provided nearby at 10, Little Ryder Street. It was the last hurrah of the upper class to keep the game as their preserve, unaware that their guest and his book, were already rapidly subverting that intention.

This pattern continued to the end of Philidor's life: spring in London earning good money and the rest of the year in Paris. After several years, and sensing that the novelty of his presence was waning somewhat, he thought of another way of stimulating interest – playing sans voir. He had been told that years before, de Legall, France's top player at the time, had tried it for one game, but found it so debilitating that he never tried it again. Philidor's response was, in effect: That's nothing, I've done that since childhood, in bed going over in my head the games I've played during the day. What's the problem?

He was loath to risk reducing himself to the level of a fairground trickster, but needs must. So he introduced a series of simultaneous blindfold exhibitions in which two opponents with boards sat beyond his sight, while he played a three person at a board, but giving odds, all of them good players. He would call out each move with little hesitation. The effect on press and public was electric. Some, assuming it to be a physical impossibility, suspected an illusion on the lines of von Kempelen's Chess Turk or Pelletier's devices, while his Parisian friends, including the writer Voltaire, philosopher Jean-Jaques Rousseau and encyclopaedist Diderot, implored him not to do it as he risked early onset dementia when his brain rapidly wore out, as it inevitably would. It didn't, of course, and his reputation rose to new levels.

But Philidor's end was sad and riven with irony. In 1792 news reached him that in Paris the Revolution was proceeding apace. The revolutionaries had overthrown the monarchy and were taking a hard line on anyone associated, however tenuously, with the king and his court. Philidor's early connections, which had so aided his early career, now counted against him, as his name was on their blacklist of *émigrés*, those who were known to have fled France, and would be arrested and tried upon their return.

He was advised to stay in London until things quietened down, and meanwhile his wife and influential friends would do their best to get his name deleted from the list. But things in Paris got worse, not better. He was unable to see his beloved wife and family, and with money running out, he became depressed and physically ill. He died c. 1st September 1795 and was buried in St. James burial ground. It was a case of irony twice-confounded as three days after his death, his name was finally removed from the émigrés list.

If Philidor had been badly treated in Paris, it was little better in London. His death went unnoticed to the extant that no-one seemed to know what had happened to his body. In 1926, John Keeble wrote in *BCM*: "For the past 100 years or so the burial place of Philidor has not been known. All George Walker could say in 1827 was that he rested 'somewhere in England'. The Australian, William Harris, who came to England in 1842 to see his grave, wrote to Staunton saying 'It is to the everlasting disgrace of English amateurs that Philidor's place of interment is not known'." On the off-chance, Keeble wrote to the Vicar of St. James's, Piccadilly and got a totally unexpected confirmation – their burial register read "September 3rd 1795 Francois Andrex Danican Phillidor. M" (sic).

Some years ago I spent time checking the headstones that had been removed to St. James's Gardens looking for the word Philidor, but there was no sign. Ray Keene told me that he and Barry Martin of the Staunton Society, having, after a great struggle, got a blue plaque erected for Howard Staunton, then petitioned for Philidor, only to be told, "Sorry – he's not famous enough".

If, like Finders, he'd had a lead plaque on his coffin lid there would still be a chance Philidor might now be found, as the whole graveyard is being sifted through by archaeologists, but realistically that seems unlikely, though being on the lookout for clues would help. A coffin containing some chess pieces would definitely shorten the odds – it could be the great man himself.

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Studies
with Stephenson

Firstly, apologies to study fans, as this month's column contains no studies. I hope that what follows is sufficient compensation.

The International Solving Contest (ISC) is an annual event where the same chess problems and endgame studies are solved throughout the world at the same time. Local controllers are sent the material a day or so before and invigilate the exam-like competition on the day. In the UK the event takes place at two venues – Surbiton, run by John Rice, and Sheffield, run by myself. The contest consists of two rounds of two hours each. Each round contains five varied chess problems and an endgame study. This year's competition took place on Sunday 27th January.

The final results (though still potentially subject to appeal) have just been announced. The winner was Polish phenomenon Piotr Murdzia with a perfect score of 60/60 in 215 minutes. Second was our own John Nunn with 59 in 217 minutes. In third place was France's Michel Caillaud with 55 in 240 minutes. The very talented Russian junior Danila Pavlov came fourth with 54 in 240 minutes. That other Polish phenomenon Kaspar Piorun came fifth with 53½ in 235 minutes.

Congratulations to John Nunn, who, now in his sixties, continues to be in the elite of the world's chess solvers. He dropped just one point. And that may have been my fault.

As someone who has been directing solving events for many years, I am always on the lookout for suitable problems and studies. Late last year I came across a 'mate in 3' problem quoted in this very magazine by the then Problem Editor Cyril Kipping. He received no solutions and himself judged it difficult. I had a look and agreed with him. For that reason and one other, which I will come to later, I was happy to suggest it to ISC directors Axel Steinbrink and Luc Palmans. They agreed and it was amongst the problems that were set for solving in the ISC.

The author of Solving in Style, *John Nunn, remains an active and rather strong solver.*

It was composed by Joe Bunting, who died in 1960. Joe was a regular player for Chesterfield and also an active chess composer. There are not many who are active in both fields these days.

Joe Bunting
To Alain White, 1945

White to play and mate in 3

With **1 ♔c7!** White vacates d7 to threaten **2 ♖xd4** (threat **3 ♘d7#**) **2...♘xd4 3 ♕xd4#**. There are the following four rather commonplace variations: **1...♕xb5 2 ♗xb5** and **3 ♘d7#**; **1...exd6 2 ♘d7+ ♔xc4 3 ♘xd6#**; **1...♖d3 2 ♗d5** (threat **3 ♘d7#**) **2...♕xb5 3 ♘xd3#**, **2...exd5 3 ♖xd5#**; **1...d3 2 ♕g1+ ♘e3 3 ♕xe3#**, **2...♘d4 3 ♕xd4#**.

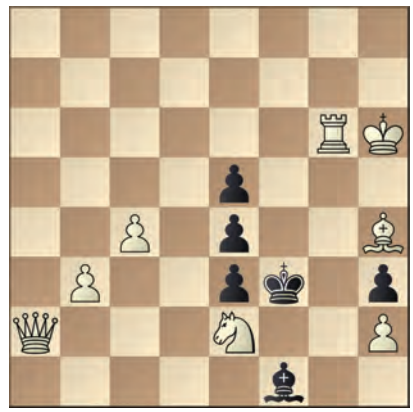
All this is correct, but the variations have nothing much in common. All good chess problems have a theme and what we have seen so far doesn't constitute one. There is a theme, but it is contained in another variation and it is that variation that Nunn missed: **1...♖ch3!**. This subtle move clears the third rank so that 2...♕g3! would pin the threatening knight on e5. It is met by **2 ♘xd4!** (threat **3 ♘xe6#**), after which **2...♖xh6** is met by **3 ♘xb3#**. Before 1...♖ch3 was played, 2 ♘xd4 would be refuted by 2...♖h2xh6!, leaving b3 still guarded. So the newly arrived rook on h3 interferes with the rook on h2.

At publication it was thought that this variation, showing a black clearance move followed by interference between like-moving pieces, had not been shown before in a mate in 3. That may well be the case. I don't know. Other defences after 2 ♘xd4 are **2...♕xb6+ 3 ♗xb6#**, **2...♕xc4 3 ♘d7#** and **2...♘xd4 3 ♕xd4#**.

Of course, that final, subtle variation was the second reason that I supplied this problem. I felt sure that some solvers would miss it. A perusal of the full results shows that Nunn was not the only solver who dropped a point on this problem, but I don't know whether it was because of that variation.

Finally, for you to solve, here is another mate in 3 by Joe Bunting, this time from a quarter of a century earlier, near the start of his composing career. Not surprisingly, it isn't so complex.

Joe Bunting
Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 1920



White to play and mate in 3

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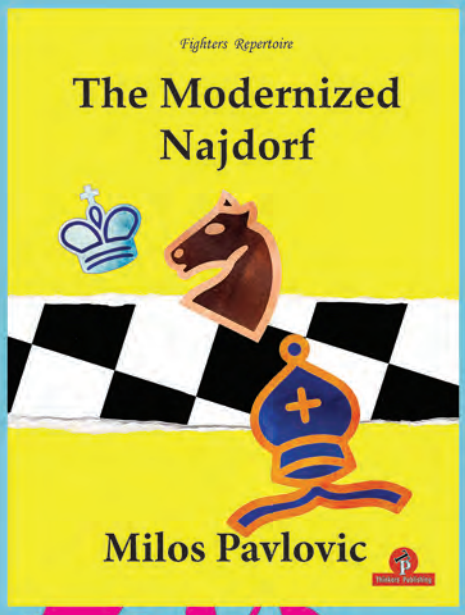

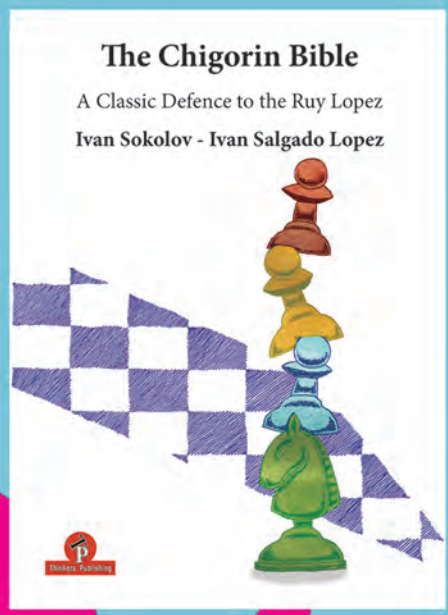

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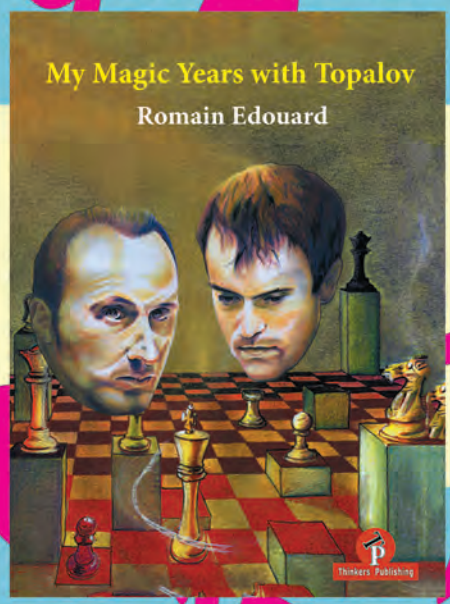

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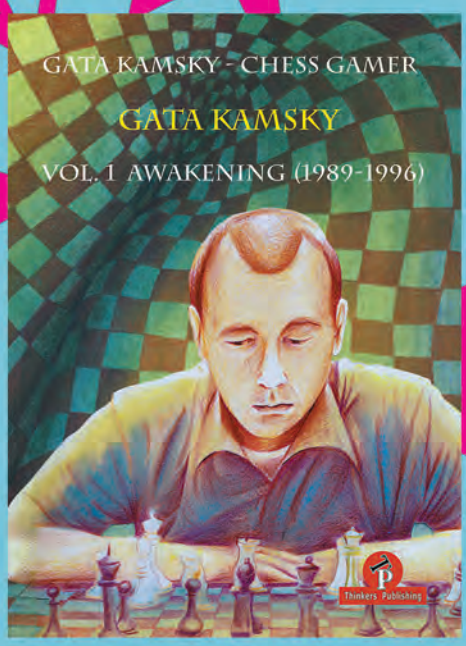
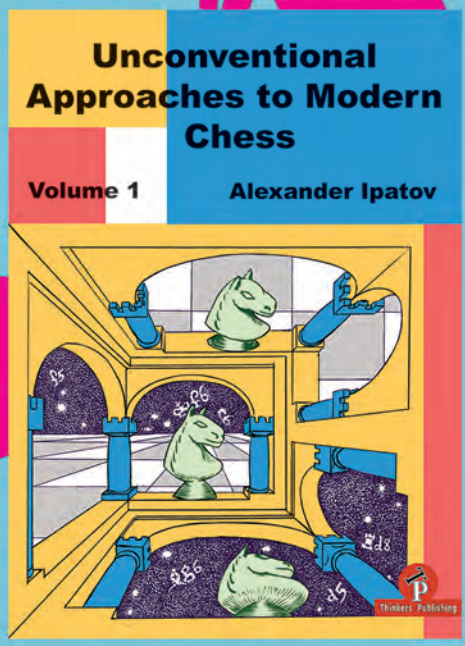
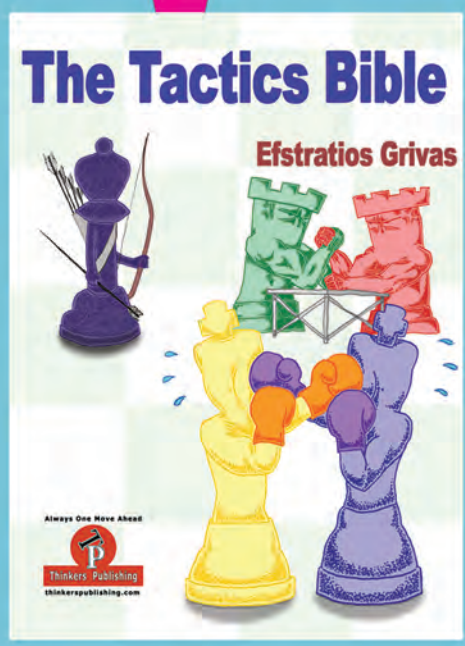






Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs - by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

I am delighted to be playing a little more chess in the 4NCL this season – especially so since I am now reunited with my former county of Shropshire. I played chess in that splendid county in my formative years and was proud to become county champion in 1998. Question to self: Was that really 21 years ago? Captain Nathaniel Paul asked me if I would play for the Shropshire second team, since most of the games are at Daventry, which is not too far from where I live. I eagerly agreed and after four games I have still not lost, so I am very happy.

However, I do not want to talk about one of my games, but rather one on the board next to me when I played last November against West is Best III, who are doing rather well also. I wish to give a full and frank apology to my team mate Ian Jamieson for publishing this painful game. The point is not to highlight his deficiencies here – because he simply did not play the sort of game he normally would have in fairness – but to show just how ruthless his opponent was in his endeavour to bring home the full point.

The gentleman doing the demolition work is one Jake Hurley. I spoke to him after his game and asked him if he would annotate it for my column. I am grateful to him for doing so. His lovely, unassuming manner is a world away from his tiger-like style of chess. The comments are entirely his, save for a couple where I add my own thoughts. That's the other thing about 4NCL. It does not only strengthen bonds in our own team, but develops new friendships as well. *Gens una sumus* as they say.

To the game then. Strap yourself in, put your visor down and wait for the three red lights to go out – go, go, go!

Notes by Jake Hurley

Larsen's opening begins 1 b3 and 2 ♗b2. On b2 the dark-squared bishop eyes the entire board with the potential to become white's strongest piece. It's an opening with an immediate double-edged nature that promises an exciting game with opportunities for both camps. Recently in the 2018 British Rapidplay Championship Danny Gormally resigned as Black against it after only 15 moves. Having missed a simple tactic nabbing a couple pawns [*Ed. – see last month's Find the Winning Moves*], Gormally would later admit in his blog for the GingerGM website that: "I angrily pushed my pieces to the centre of the board, and then stormed out of the venue, kicking a wall and injuring my foot."

Not all encounters with 1 b3 end so violently, at least off the board, but all are distinctly marked by a fondness for White's 'other' bishop. On the first weekend of the 2018/19 4NCL I was fortunate enough to be on the right side of the complications.

I.Jamieson-J.Hurley
4NCL, Daventry 2018
Nimzo-Larsen Attack

1 b3 e5 2 ♗b2 ♘c6 3 e3 d5 4 ♗b5 ♗d6

The game begins with standard development, where I opt for an aggressive set-up claiming the centre. White strikes back against the centre with his bishops, threatening to lop off Black's c6-knight and cement control of the dark squares. Indeed, it later becomes apparent White should have done this when he had the chance.

5 c4

Slightly premature perhaps, though this didn't come as a surprise. I'd seen Ian had played this before, but I was more worried about the 5 f4 lines as I felt those to be more in shape with White's idea of owning the dark squares and busting open his Larsen bishop.

A couple of weeks after this game I was able to play 1 b3 in a league match myself, reaching the same position. However, before launching c4-c5, I inserted 5 ♘f3, prompting 5...♕e7. Now after 6 c4 ♘f6 7 c5!? ♗xc5 I could play 8 ♘xe5. In this variation the pin on the c6-knight coupled with the long-range bishop on b2 spell problems for Black, and perhaps this is what Ian too had in mind, although without the knight in the attack White was forced to hand the initiative over to Black.

5...♘ge7 6 c5

A clever-looking move, trapping the bishop into recapturing, but a mistake; not because it drops a pawn (as White will pick up e5), but as White is behind in development, he shouldn't be initiating trades. Moreover it's taken five moves to achieve this (b3, ♗b2, c4, c5 and ♗xe5) compared to just three for Black (e5, ♗d6 and ♗xc5). From a classical standpoint on development, this can't be good. I began to feel confident as this point as I saw 7...0-0 would also be coming with tempo, when I'm almost completely developed and White is now the one with questions to answer.

6...♗xc5 7 ♗xe5 0-0 8 ♗b2

Hardly appetising, though the engine's top choice. The Larsen bishop has already joined and is participating in the game, but potentially at the cost of White's remaining forces.

White would like to play 8 d4 with tempo, but pushing immediately cuts off his Larsen bishop from the dark squares and something like 8...♗b4+ followed by 9...♘xe5 10 dxe5 d4 looked nasty. With the thought in mind that White really wants to play d4, my next move felt automatic.

8...d4

If one of us is playing d4, it's me.

9 ♕c2

I was expecting 9 ♕h5 to tickle the bishop on c5, where I would have the choice of the solid 9...♗b6 or adding further dark-square pressure with 9...♘f5, planning to meet 10 g4!? with 10...♕d5. 9 ♕c2 didn't feel right though, especially as the queen now sits within jumping range of some juicy knight leaps.

9...♕d5

Defending the bishop with tempo against on g2.

10 ♗f1

Further undevelopment. 10 ♘f3, bringing

out a piece and blocking the queen's sight of g2, was to be preferred. (Carl: I saw Ian play this move and thought how nasty this looked already. White should have more development after all.)

10...♘b4

I was half-expecting the humorous situation after 11 ♕d1 where White's position has travelled back in time to the start of the game. Importantly, his position is still recognisable as coming from 1 b3, as the bishop on b2 is the only piece seeming to have moved. A true love letter to White's dark squared bishop. Of course, we can ignore the fact that Black has every other piece playing and a '-7' advantage with 11...♗f5 – White has got his Larsen bishop.

11 ♕c4

(Carl: Black is already clearly winning. It was going to be a tough old game for my teammate.) On 11 ♕c1 White has to be wary of the weaknesses on g2 and d3 (....♘d3+ being a monster threat). 11...d3 looked tempting against the text, but would allow 12 ♘c3 with an easy developing tempo and I wanted to keep White cramped.

11...♕xc4 12 bxc4 dxe3

With the same rationale behind not playing the tempting 11...d3 – White's pieces are restricted for as long as possible and also denied any black targets. White is the one under attack and without any real idea of counterplay. By severely limiting his options I also had a much easier task in calculating, whereas White must constantly be on the lookout for all sorts. It's worth noting that if White attempts to cover the knight fork here with 13 ♘a3 he allows the pawn fork 13...exf2+. Also unappealing is 13 ♔d1 exf2 14 ♘f3 ♗f5 when Black is two pawns up, ahead in development, and the white king is stranded in the centre.

13 fxe3 ♘c2+ 14 ♔f2

The engine's top choice as it aids future development by not restricting the light-squared bishop's diagonal or the rooks on the first rank. Black is in no rush to capture the rook, as we can wait until White threatens to save it on the next move. With plenty of time to spare I now started to properly look at the position, and with the line-up of the black king, white rook, and loose bishop on c1, I spied a tempting combination.

14...f5

Cardiff University's Jake Hurley was delighted to see his favourite 1 b3 played against him.

(Carl. I spent more time watching this game than my own – and this is a nice move. There is no need yet to grab the rook; better to open lines against the exposed king.)

15 d4 f4

The idea behind 14...f5. Black seeks to trade one active piece in the attack for another. The loose bishop on f1 ensures Black can retain his piece, but regardless White has made no effort to develop any further pieces, seeming content with his Larsen bishop on b2. Essentially Black can afford to sacrifice material for the attack due to his superior mobility and White's lack of development.

16 dxc5

The engine prefers to play 16 e4 and giving up the d4-pawn, allowing a knight-bishop discovery, yet still largely favours Black. Rejecting the sacrifice to give up material yourself and walk into a battery is not really a human continuation, but either way at this point I knew if he didn't accept the sacrifice White would be lost positionally, and lost tactically if he did.

16...fxe3+ 17 ♔e2 ♖f2+

"That's the move I missed!" was the dejected reply from my opponent.

18 ♔d1 ♖xf1+ 19 ♔xc2 ♗f5+ 20 ♔b3 ♗xb1

The smoke has cleared from the 15...f4 combination and Black is only a pawn up on material, but White's pieces are in near zugzwang. Only White's Larsen bishop and king can claim any freedom of movement, and even then white has only one idea.

21 ♗c3

Fittingly, White evacuates his Larsen bishop from the b2-square to add another attacker to the pinned light-squared bishop on f1. However, this state of affairs can be simply remedied.

21 ..♖d8 22 ♔b2 ♖dd1 0-1

Breaking the pin and threatening to take the knight and promote the pawn. Here White threw in the towel in a rather satisfying final position that would only be improved aesthetically if my knight were able to magic its way on to e1. Overall, it was a pleasing game where every one of Black's pieces cooperated in the attack. Conversely, by the final position the mantra of White's game is illustrated: 'Who needs other pieces? I have my Larsen bishop!'.

♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖

Well done to Jake, and commiserations to Ian. When he wins a fine game, I should be sure to include it here. I gave this game because I enjoyed it simply for the sake of chess. It was exciting (for Jake!), and illustrates the importance of speedy development, placing pieces on the most effective squares and utilising every turn as ruthlessly as possible. Good advice I learned was to try to ask questions of your opponent with each and every move.

♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖

The Future of Chess in Education

Sean Marsh reports from the sixth London Chess Conference, which kicked off the vast event that was the London Chess Classic

The 10th London Chess Classic featured some of the world's top players and plenty more besides, including chess extravaganzas for juniors, a big FIDE Open event, three CSC training days and a CSC Tutor Conference. The festival was spread across four different venues, all the way from Google HQ near Kings Cross Railway Station, to Kensington Olympia. The action, however, started at a much smaller venue – the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, the new venue for the annual London Chess Conference.

Chess in Schools and Communities was already in the habit of utilising this fine venue for their London training days. The walls of the rooms are replete with artwork, adding a certain ambience to proceedings. The venue was a new one for the conference and it proved to be absolutely ideal.

Every year we have a theme and this time it was 'The Future of Chess in Education'. This is a particularly interesting and extremely topical subject, not just in the UK, where the endeavours of Chess in Schools and Communities are making a significant impact in the classroom, but also around the world. The time seemed ripe for a serious sharing of ideas on the subject.

The winning conference team of John Foley (Conference Director) and Stefan Löffler (Programme Director) maintained the essential continuity from previous years and they have continued to develop the event in fine style. Having been involved as a Chairperson and speaker in previous years, I was honoured to be given the position of Deputy Director on this occasion, thus enabling me to be far more involved and giving me an extra insight into the behind-scenes aspects of the whole event.

The London Chess Conference has established itself as a premier event. Proof of the pudding comes in the form of two main aspects: the most recent conference was the sixth in the successful series and the number of renowned speakers continues to grow in both numbers and depth. The international aspect was confirmed by the participation of delegates from all over the UK and Europe and then from even further afield, including the USA and Australia.

Talking to the delegates helps to put certain matters into perspective. When Stefan and I interviewed Obinna Ogbonnaya, who had travelled all the way from Nigeria, he went on to stress how pleased he was to be able to attend the conference and that it cost him virtually all he had to get to London.

Indeed, as far as the numbers go, 113 people registered for the weekend and no fewer than 25 countries – spanning five continents – were represented. Over the course of the two days there was a veritable cornucopia of presentations, workshops, debates and exhibitors. In all, there were 40 presentations, featuring 50 contributors.

We witnessed an amalgamation of people from all walks of chess life; from teachers, tutors and organisers of large-scale events to grandmasters and even a former world champion, Hou Yifan.

It is unusual to have a chess event without a competitive element. The whole point of the conference is to enable and encourage the sharing of ideas, projects, resources and plans in the hope that we can all learn from each other for the greater good.

The ongoing success of the conference is not just down to the hard work of the organisers and the excellence of the speakers; it also needs substantial funding to succeed. Thus, we greatly appreciated the support of Chess in Schools and Communities, Erasmus+, the European Chess Union, Chessable, DecodeChess and Millennium Chess.

I found that having the blend of the modern alongside the more traditional educational methods proved to be very interesting. Chessable are currently making a big impression and it was very useful for people to see for themselves what they can offer. Yet away from screens, the printed word still has much to offer and I was particularly impressed by a new magazine from Germany called *Rochade Kids*, which is absolutely full of excellent teaching material, some of which I have been using in my own lessons, with the side benefit of teaching the children a few basic German words.

The conference's packed programme began with a number of special guest speakers offering their educational visions. It is difficult to single out speakers, as each one brought something different and highly instructive to the table. Malcolm Pein was there, representing Chess in Schools and Communities, as was the ubiquitous Jesper Hall, who was at the heart of the conference once more. Bachar Kouatly, representing the French Chess Federation, stressed his educational vision with the telling statement: "With only competitive chess we remain weak." He also highlighted one of the strengths of chess in comparison to other sports (France does indeed give chess the 'sport' status) – namely that it can be played both online and in person, meaning very large numbers can be introduced to chess very quickly and cheaply.

The conference offered a significant number of parallel workshops, all of which were extremely interesting. Indeed, one of the very few pieces of constructive criticism reported back to me was that it would have been even better if it had been possible to see *all* of the workshops.

The majority of the ideas discussed were for use in the world of junior chess, but by no means all. Chess is being used more and more as an outreach tool for local communities and beyond. Chess in prisons is a hot topic at the moment and anyone who has read Carl Portman's extraordinary book *Chess Behind Bars* (Quality Chess, 2017) will already be aware that such a project can – without any shadow of doubt – change lives for the better. It was so good to see Carl as one of the group discussing this special subject.

Chess in prisons is a project that will continue to grow, especially now international connections have been made. France, Sweden and Norway are all active in the same field and David Smerdon, assistant professor of Economics at the University of Queensland who came all the way from Australia to attend the conference, is studying the effects of a chess intervention on inmates.

Another special highlight was the session in which key figures discussed their respective large scale events. We were delighted to see Sarah Longson making a presentation on the Delancey UK Schools' Chess Challenge and it was particularly interesting to hear how Sweden and Germany manage to fill stadiums with juniors for their massive events.

This was, without doubt, the most

It all adds up to a great success - CHAMPS (Chess and Mathematics for Primary Schools - https://chessplus.net/champs/) at the CSC conference.

ambitious and best event in the series to date. What does the future hold for the London Chess Conference? It is not easy to find obvious ways to improve on this particular edition. The immediate future presents a challenge too, as the most important aspect of the conference is not what has been presented; it is rather what everyone does with the shared information and ideas to take their own chess development forward.

Many were awestruck to see pictures of stadiums full of juniors playing chess. Can we imagine such a bonanza in the UK? Before the conference, the answer would have been no. However, now that we have seen evidence of what our international friends and colleagues have already achieved then it should spark the imaginations of everybody else. It does little good to see all of these marvellous ideas in action and then to forget all about them until the next conference, when the initiative and ambition will be lost. No, the time for action is now. International relations must be further developed and we must see more people finding the time in their respective busy schedules to implement some of the ideas that have worked brilliantly for others.

In any event, the conference started the festival of chess in ambitious and inspirational fashion, giving everyone who attended and participated plenty of food for thought as the year of 2018 stepped aside to make way for a brave new year.

Anyone wanting to catch up with some of the sessions may be interested to know that a fine and extensive repository of footage can be accessed via the conference website: https://londonchessconference.com/.

Forthcoming Events

March 2 **Golders Green Rapidplay**
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

March 7 **Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz**
www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

March 8-10 **Blackpool Congress**
www.blackpoolchess.org.uk

March 9-10 **East Devon Congress, Exeter**
eastdevonchesscongress.com

March 9-10 **Hampstead U2200 Congress**
hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

March 9 **West Wales Rapidplay, Swansea**
www.welshchessunion.uk/calendar or call 01554 834120

March 10 **Solihull Chess960 Rapidplay**
www.solihullchess.org/chess960 or call 07975 530977

March 16-17 **4NCL, Telford, Doncaster**
www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

March 19 **Muswell Hill Rapidplay**
muswellhillchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

March 22-24 **Galway Congress**
www.galwaychess.com/galway-congress-2019/

March 22-24 **Hereford Congress**
www.castlechess.co.uk or call 01707 659080

March 23-24 **Nottingham Congress**
nottschess.org or call 0115 945 5908

March 31 **Birmingham Rapidplay**
rapidplay.birminghamchess.org.uk

And for the Online Connoisseur:

March 4-15 **World Team Ch., Astana**
kazchess.kz/en/team_ch_astana2019/; China, England, Russia, etc.

March 18-29 **European Individual, Skopje**
eicc2019.mk; Artemiev, Bluebaum, Kovalev, Nisipeanu, Saric, etc.

March 20-31 **U.S. Championships, St. Louis**
www.uschesschamps.com; Caruana, Nakamura, Shankland, So, etc.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact Matt@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.

Home News

BATTERSEA – *The old complaint that "chess players couldn't even organise a piss-up in a brewery" is unlikely to be new to readers, but... sometimes they actually can! Step forward two of London's largest and most dynamic clubs, Battersea and Hammersmith, who organised 'Chess-Up in a Brewery', a handicap rapidplay held at the Sambrook Brewery, won, despite the time handicap, by the top two seeds, Blair Connell and Ryszard Maciol.*

CAMBRIDGE – Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer (ii.viii.1927-xxvi.xii.2018) was best known for his work in the fields of computer science, mathematics and university administration. However, he once forced a change in the rules of bridge and was also a pretty competent chess player when younger. Swinnerton-Dyer's father, Sir Leonard, was BCF President in the 1950s, while Sir Peter represented Cambridge in four Varsity matches. Leonard Barden remembered that "Sir Peter played, and I think defeated, Jacques Mieses in the Hastings Premier Reserves in 1949-50. He was thus among the last Morphy three survivors via the Mieses-Bird and Mieses-Paulsen routes."

CLEVEDON – The Somerset New Year Congress (12-13 January) clashed with the second 4NCL weekend, but didn't feature an Open.
Major: 1 Martyn Harris (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 4/5, 2-3 George Miller (Keynsham), George Georgiou (Swindon) 3½.
Intermediate: 1 Stephen Williams (Cwmbran) 4, 2-7 Timothy Jones (Bristol), Duncan Macarthur (Keynsham), Peter Dimond (Bath), Rod Langham (Oxford), Joshua Gittins (Gloucester), Martin Jones (Wales) 3½.
Minor: 1 Gul Kapur (Enfield) 4½, 2-3 John Jeremiah (Wellington), Jonathan Jones (Steynton) 4.

FRODSHAM – The Frodsham Congress (1-3 February) now boasts a FIDE-rated Open.
Open: 1-2 Oliver Jackson (Cheshire), Thomas Carroll (Hoylake) 4/5, 3-4 Chris Vassiliou (Chorlton), Ronald Schult (Germany) 3½.
Major: 1 Greg Hughes (Wallasey) 4½, 2 Geoff Laurence (Macclesfield) 4, 3-7 Sam Davies (Southport), Andrew Barber (Buckley), Kevin Winter (Bradford), Mark Cromwell (Frodsham), Michael Farthing (Morecambe) 3½.
Minor: 1 David Price (Crewe) 4½, 2-4 Julian Hawthorne (Kidsgrove), Paul Jackson (Lancaster), Andrew Beswick (Chorlton) 4.

HARROGATE – Danny Gormally has been in good form of late and triumphed at the latest 4NCL Congress, which was held at the impressive setting of the Old Swan Hotel in Harrogate (18-20 January). Gormally drew with Peter Wells in round 4 to reach 3½/4 and then turned around an unpleasant position against Alan Merry.
Open: 1 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 4½/5, 2-4 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Keith Arkell (Swindon), Jonah Willow (Nottingham) 4.
Major: 1-3 Paul Kendal (Beverley), Brian Coop (Harrogate), Tim Hilton (Denton) 4½.
Minor: 1 Michael Johnson (Harrogate) 5, 2-4 Daniel Dufton (Keighley), Simeon Bott (Cambridge), Zak Tomlinson (Doncaster) 4.

Nottingham teenager Jonah Willow is fast becoming a force to be reckoned with, but had no answer to the attacking verve of Peter Wells.

P.Wells-J.Willow
Harrogate 2019
Caro-Kann Defence

1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 g6 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5

Play has now transposed to a line of the Panov-Botvinnik Attack, also commonly reached via 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 cxd5 ♘xd5.

8 ♕b3 e6 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♗h6 ♗f8 11 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 12 ♗b5 ♔g7?!

Now Black too will be saddled with pawn weaknesses. The superior 12...♘ce7 13 0-0 ♔g7 14 ♖ac1 ♖f8 15 ♖fd1 ♘f6 looked a better bet in Jones-Saric, Spanish Team Championship 2017, although White may retain a pull even here.

13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 0-0 ♕b6 15 ♖fc1

Beginning to lay siege to c6. 15 ♕c2 was also strong.

15...♘f4?!

Shorn of counterplay, Willow tries to go active, but he should have hunkered down for solid defence in a slightly worse position after 15...♕xb3 16 axb3 ♘e7 17 ♘e4 ♖d8.

16 ♕c2 ♗a6 17 ♕e4 ♘d3 18 ♘a4!

The beginning of a strong plan. Wells races his queen's knight to its best outpost, unafraid to offer the exchange in the process.

18...♕b5 19 ♘c5! ♘xc1 20 ♕e5+ f6

Desperately trying to complicate. The alternative was 20...♔g8 21 ♖xc1 when Black has one rook well and truly out of play and will surely be cleaned up on the dark squares: for example, 21...♖d8 (21...h6 22 b4 ♖h7 is the best the silicon can do, but looks horrendous and also permits the simple 23 a4 ♕e2 24 ♘e4) 22 ♕f6 ♖f8 23 d5!! (a notable concept and precursor to the game) 23...cxd5 (23...exd5 24 ♘d7 ♖e8 25 ♘g5 is White's other idea) 24 ♘xe6 fxe6 25 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 (or 25...♔g7 26 ♖c7+ ♔h6 27 ♕h3#) 26 ♘e5 ♕b7 27 ♖c8+ ♔g7 28 ♖xh8 ♔xh8 29 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 30 ♘d6 and there's no defence.

21 ♕c7+ ♔h6 22 ♕f4+ ♔g7 23 ♘xe6+! ♔f7

White also wins after 23...♔g8 24 ♖xc1 ♕xb2 25 ♖e1 ♕b7 26 ♘c5.

24 ♕c7+ ♔xe6 25 ♖xc1 ♖hc8

A similar finish would have occurred after 25...♖he8 26 d5+! (or just 26 ♖xc6+ ♔f5 27 ♖c5+) 26...♕xd5 (if 26...cxd5 27 ♘d4# or 26...♔f5 27 ♘d4+) 27 ♖e1+ ♔f5 28 g4+!

♔xg4 29 ♕g3+ followed by 29...♔f5 30 ♘h4# or 29...♔h5 30 ♕h4#.
26 ♖e1+ ♕e2

27 d5+! 1-0

Willow had seen enough. His king won't escape, as shown by 27...♔xd5 (if 27...cxd5 28 ♘d4# or 27...♔f5 28 ♕d7+ ♔f4 29 ♕d6+ ♔f5 30 ♖xe2 ♗xe2 31 ♕e6+ ♔f4 32 ♕xf6+) 28 ♕d7+ ♔e4 29 ♕e6+ ♔f4

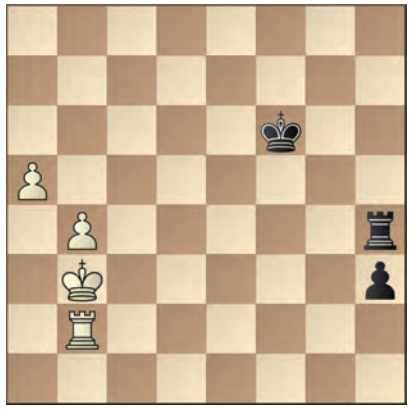
HULL – Chess continues to thrive in Hull as news broke that the 2019 English Women's Championship will take place at the city's iconic station hotel over the weekend of August 30th to September 1st. ECF Director of Women's Chess Chris Fegan commented, "The holding of the EWC 2019 in Hull builds on the very successful 2018 British Championships, also held in Hull, and I am sure that the EWC 2019 will exceed all previous records."

We should also mention that the ECF have announced a resurrection of the English Seniors Championships, which will take place in Solihull, 4th-7th April. Both the Over-50 and Over-65 sections will be FIDE-rated, six-round Swisses.

KIDLINGTON – FM Marcus Harvey defeated Mark Hebden in the final round to become the 2019 Oxfordshire Champion at the popular Kidlington Congress (2-3 February).
Open: 1 Marcus Harvey (Southampton Uni) 4½/5, 2 James Jackson (Banbury) 4, 3-4 Jon Manley (Oxford), Shabir Okhai (Syston) 3½.
Under-180: 1-3 Roger de Coverly (Bourne End), Csaba Koszta (Witney), Robert Taylor (Syston) 4.
Under-145: 1-2 David Dyer (Cowley), Steven Harris (Bracknell) 4½, 3-5 Peter Lim (Harrow), Callum Evans (Aylesbury), Hashim Jusoh (Oxford) 4.
Under-120: 1 Ryan Cheung (Southampton) 5, 2 Chris Fraser (West Bridgford) 4½/5, 3-6 William Stock (Hastings), Barry Miles (Coulsdon), Robin Carr (Cumnor), Tim Cutter (Guildford) 4.

The outcome of the tournament might have been different, however, had James Jackson not adopted a safety-first, if very natural move at a key point late on the Saturday evening:

J.Jackson-M.Harvey
Kidlington 2019



48 ♖h2?

48 a6 (or 48 b5) 48...h2 (the white pawns are simply too strong and fast after 48...♖h7 49 b5 ♖a7 50 ♔b4) 49 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 50 b5 was correct, reaching an important position to know. The old adage is that "two connected passed pawns on the sixth defeat a rook" and here Black cannot stop them getting there and so is completely lost: for example, 50...♔e6 (or 50...♖h1 51 a7 ♖a1 52 b6 ♔e6 53 b7) 51 b6 ♔d6 52 a7 ♖h8 53 b7 ♔c7 54 a8♕ and White wins by a tempo.
48...♔e7 49 a6 ♔d6 50 a7 ♖h8 51 ♔c4 ♔c6 52 ♖xh3

The tactical motif which no doubt attracted White to 48 ♖h2, but with his pawn already on a7 he will be unable to break Black's blockade.
52...♖c8 53 ♖h5 ♔b7+ 54 ♖c5 ♖h8 5 ♖a5 ♖h4+ 56 ♔b3 ♔a8 57 ♖a6 ♖h3+ 58 ♔a4 ♖h1 59 ♔b3

White's main issue is highlighted by the line 59 ♔a5 ♖a1+ 60 ♔b6 ♖xa6+ 61 ♔xa6 and stalemate.
59...♖h3+ 60 ♔c2 ♖h7 ½-½

KIRKCALDY – The Kirkcaldy Congress took place at the Dean Park Hotel (19-20 January), and featured both a small Open and an Under-2200 section.
Open: 1-2 Calin Gheorghiu (Edinburgh), Hamish Olson (Aberdeen) 3/4, 3-4 Declan Shafi (Dundee), Junhao Xian (Glasgow) 2½.
Under-2200: 1 Stephen Hogg (Dundee) 3½, 2-4 Ian Marks (Cumbernauld), Daniel Thomas (East Kilbride), Benjamin Ridge (Edinburgh) 3.
Under-1800: 1 Richard Dowling (Corstorphine) 3½, 2-3 Keith Aitchison (Edinburgh), Jim Robertson (East Kilbride) 3.
Under-1400: 1-2 Iain Hope (Musselburgh), Gordon Greig (Dunfermline) 3½, 3-5 Walter Pearson (Auchendinny), Pranav Saravanan (Aberdeen), Ishan Kumar (Kirkintillock) 3.
Junior Under-800: 1 Michael Moroz (Glasgow) 4½, 2-4 Rishab Anthuvan, Ishan Rohatgi (both Kirkintillock), Nivedita Suyal (Corstorphine) 4.

LONDON – Already this year Adam Raoof has staged two Hampstead Under-2200 Congresses. The first (19-20 January) saw Marcus Osborne (Wimbledon) amass 4½/5 to edge out Federico Rocco (Hendon), Aaravamudhan Balaji (Couldson), and Ben Keohane (London) by half a point. Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) won the Under-1900 section with the same score, coming clear of Oliver Finnegan (Loughton), while '+4' was also enough for Eric Eedle (Barnet) to win the Under-135 section ahead of Gert de Block (Cambridge).

Marcus Osborne, however, had to settle for second place over the weekend of February 16th-17th, as he was edged out in the top section by Nicholas Tavoularis (Middlesbrough), who racked up 4½/5. John Bussmann (Surbiton) and Sarah Weersing (Linton) shared first place with the same score in the Under-1900, while Nigel White (Guildford), Chris Eliadis (Woking) and Lee Bullock (Hackney) tied for first on 4/5 in the Under-135.

John Merriman triumphed at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay, which was a touch weaker than usual due to a clash with the 4NCL in Telford.
Open: 1 John Merriman (Petts Wood) 5½/6, 2-3 Tom Eckersley-Waites, Ieuan Ward (both Battersea) 4½.
Major: 1 Saahil Bansal (Kent) 5, 2-4 Kier Eyles (Emsworth), David Lawrence (Oxford), Oliver Finnegan (Loughton) 4½.
Minor: 1-3 Tomas Vesciunas (Lithuania), David McNish (Enfield), Mark Davies (Emsworth) 5.
Amateur: 1 Alexander Funk (Kings Head) 5, 2-4 Harry Minor (Isle of Man), David Dunne (Nottingham), Geoffrey Simms (Surbiton) 4½.
Improvers: 1-2 Aaron Dhillon (Kent), Alex

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Kuropatwa (Middlesex) 5½, 3 Haridhra Balachandar (Kent) 4½.
Under-80: 1 Johann Bruhn (London) 4½, 2 Riccardo Rebonato (Kew) 4.

NEWRY – To celebrate the recent reaffiliation of the Ulster Chess Union to the Irish Chess Union, a rapidplay on February 2nd was sponsored by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Top seed Conor O'Donnell lost to both Danny Roberts (Civil Service Chess Club, Belfast) and Gabor Horvath (Strand Chess Club, Belfast). Roberts would finish clear second on 5/6, half a point behind Horvath. 16-year-old James Wong (Strand, Belfast) won the Intermediate section with 5/6, finishing half a point ahead of Adrian Gilmore (Omagh), while the Junior tournament was won, also with 5/6, by Paul Anderson (Ballynafeigh Chess Club, Belfast).

NOTTINGHAM – Ameet Ghasi swept aside the field at a very successful Nottingham Rapidplay on January 20th.
Open: 1 Ameet Ghasi (Richmond) 6/6, 2 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 5, 3-7 Shabir Okhai (Syston), Samuel Milson (Louth), Daniel Pousada Garcia (Bolton), Kishan Modi (Leicester), Florian Biermann (Nottingham) 4.
Major: 1-2 Sam Davies (Southport), Ethan Rowe (Northampton) 4½, 3-5 Shane Bhayat (Notttingham), Robert Henfrey (Shepshed), David Patrick (Halifax) 4.
Intermediate: 1-2 Matthew Bubis (Derby), Robert Mitchell (Shepshed) 5, 3-7 Dushan Malimage, Ben Gilpin (both West Bridgford), Michael Johnson (Coventry), Richard Stokes (Stamford), Neil Roberts (Lincoln) 4½.
Minor: 1 Kajus Mikalajunas (Leicester) 5½, 2-5 Raymond Bettam (Coleshill), Chris Fraser (West Bridgford), Kian Chan, Alexandra Arlachova (both West Nottingham) 5.

PERTH – Unlike Kirkcaldy, the Perth Congress (8-10 February) only had three sections for adults and was once again a major success.
Open: 1 Junhau Xian 4½, 2-4 Helge Magnusssen (both Glasgow), Hamish Olson (Aberdeen), Stephen Hogg (Dundee) 4.
Major: 1-6 Joseph Watson-McFie (Renfrewshire), Steven Harvey (Oban), Mark Monaghan (Cumbernauld), Jan Barron-Majerick (Inverness), Jonathan McKay (Aberdeen), Gwenole Le Feuvre (Perth) 4.
Minor: 1-2 Gordon Greig (Dunfermline), Callum Robertson (Dunbar) 4½, 3-5 Derek Coope (Oban), Allan Buchan (Edinburgh), Iwo Labuda (Perth) 4.

STOCKPORT – The Stockport Rapidplay attracted 140 players to the town's Guildhall on January 27th. In the Open, Adam Ashton (3Cs) and Joseph McPhillips (Bolton) both scored 5/6, while Phil Seery (Bare Village) won the Major with 5½. Mick Norris (Bury) also scored 5½ in the Intermediate, as did Denzel Supatan (Ashton) in the Minor.

TELFORD – We'll have the best of the action from the February 4NCL weekend next month. In the top flight, Guildford and Manx have both won all six of their matches. The leading scorers in Division Two's two pools are former Division One sides Spirit of Atticus and Barbican. Meanwhile Kings Head and Surbiton top their respective pools in Division Three South, which also have just one round left to play before that division too divides into promotion and relegation groups.

Division Four South is a 34-team Swiss, which Crowthorne are currently leading, while in the 14-team Division Three North, Shropshire and White Rose II both have 12/12. At the latest weekend in Horwich, White Rose II captain and North East England MEP Jonathan Arnott excelled himself, winning quickly ahead of driving 10 or so miles to exchange cars and places on the hard shoulder with a stricken team-mate, who also went on to win.

TORQUAY – Keith Arkell triumphed at the Simon Bartlett Memorial Congress (25-27 January), which was held as the same venue as the Paignton Congress uses these days, the Livermead House Hotel.
Open: 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 5/5, 2 Alan Punnett (Guildford) 3½, 3-6 John Stephens (Exmouth), Peter Anderson (Lowestoft), Jonathan Underwood (Seaton), Stephen Piper (Salisbury) 3.
Major: 1 Yasser Tello (Wimbledon) 4, 2-4 Brian Gosling (East Budleigh), Raymond Gamble (Spondon), John Nyman (Kings Head) 3½.
Intermediate: 1 Robert Wilby (Plymouth) 4, 2-4 George Lekoudis (Hastings), Dinah Norman (Guildford), Eddie Fierek (Gloucester) 3½.
Minor: 1 Chris Fraser (West Bridgford) 4½, 2 Graham Mill-Wilson (Plymouth) 4, 3-6 Timothy Allen (Battersea), David Peacock (London), Barry Lippard, Steven Cawser (both Brixham) 3.

Keith Arkell, a multi-time winner of the Paignton Congress added the Simon Bartlett Memorial Congress to his list of triumphs

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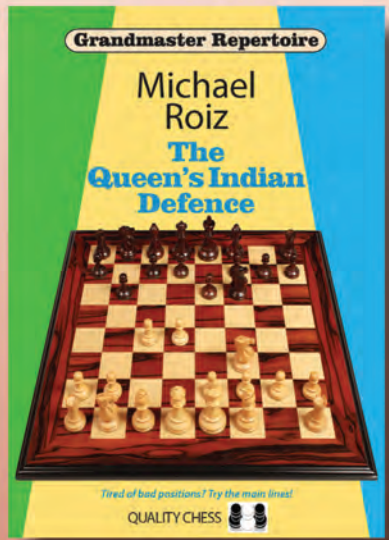

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Overseas News

ARMENIA – Chess might even be considered the national sport of Armenia, so it was no surprise to see the country recently honour one of its most famous sons on a bank note, the ninth world chess champion Tigran Petrosian gracing the new 2000 Dram note.

FRANCE – Chess will again feature on the big screen in the French film *Fahim*, starring Gerard Depardieu. The veteran actor will play FM Xavier Parmentier, the coach of Fahim Mohammad, a Bangladeshi refugee who was only allowed to stay with his family in France after winning the French Under-12 Championship. Mohammad shot to fame in his adopted land and the 2014 book *Un Roi Clandestine* by Parmentier and Sophie Le Callennec was a minor hit. Now aged 18, Fahim Mohammad is only rated 2218, but his story may well still inspire once the film about the son of an illegal immigrant becoming a chess whizz is released later this year.

GERMANY – The very late withdrawal of Aachen has left only 15 teams in the ever-strong Bundesliga. This is a league which even Guildford would struggle to win. Defending champions Baden-Baden and Solingen both have 14 points after the fourth weekend of the season, but Solingen have played a match more, going down to defeat against David Howell's Hockenheim side. Howell is actually yet to appear this season, but Michael Adams hot-footed it over from Gibraltar to represent Baden-Baden, for whom he now has 4/5.

GREECE – As we went to press in mid-February, thanks to his victory at Wijk aan Zee, Magnus Carlsen had once again established a clear list at the top of the rating list released by the FIDE Office in Athens: 1 Magnus Carlsen (NOR) 2845, 2 Fabiano Caruana (USA) 2828, 3 Ding Liren (CHN) 2812, 4 Anish Giri (NED) 2797, 5 Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (AZE) 2790, 6 Vishy Anand (IND) 2779, 7 Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (FRA) 2776, 8-9 Ian Nepomniachtchi, Alexander Grischuk (both RUS) 2771, 10 Wesley So (USA) 2762.

Meanwhile Hou Yifan remains clear at the top of the women's list at 2662, with compatriot Ju Wenjun back on 2580. Mariya Muzychuk is third with 2560, one point ahead of Kateryna Lahno and five ahead of sister Anna. In terms of Britain, Jovanka Houska tops the list at 2424, ahead of Harriet Hunt (2417), Dagne Ciuksyte (2299), Akshaya Kalaiyalahan (2212), and Katarzyna Toma (2194), who has recently switched federation. Meanwhile the top five British men were: Michael Adams (2705), Matthew Sadler (2691), David Howell and Gawain Jones (both 2689), and Luke McShane (2663).

RUSSIA – It was overshadowed on the world stage by Gibraltar, but the Moscow Open (26 January - 3 February) was hardly a shabby affair. Unsurprisingly it was visited by FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich and, more surprisingly, by his predecessor, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. 32-year-old Boris Savchenko wheeled out the Swiss Gambit, bouncing back from an opening round defeat to grab first place with 7½/9, finishing a half-point ahead of fellow Russian GMs Pavel Ponkratov, Sanan Sjugirov, Alexey Pridorozhny, Igor Lysyj, Dmitry Kryakvin and Ukrainian IM Oleg Ivanov.

USA – A new season of chess.com's PRO Chess League is underway. The 36 teams feature plenty of the world's leading players, such as Ding Liren, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Most of the rounds take place on a Tuesday evening, so do tune in then if you'd like to cheer on the London Lions, with whom wunderkind Shreyas Royal is gaining some vital experience. Shreyas even forced Fabiano Caruana no less into an exchange sacrifice for a pawn and solid position before he was later outplayed.

As we went to press, the inaugural Cairns Cup was drawing to a close in Saint Louis, an exciting tournament in which plenty of the world's strongest female players competed. We'll have a full report next time. Also connected to that modern day chess mecca is the Grand Chess Tour, which will take in two new continents this year. Each of the 12 participants will play in the two classical tournaments and three of the rapid and blitz events as they aim to qualify for the finals, which will again take place as part of the London Chess Classic. The full itinerary:

i. Cote d'Ivoire Rapid & Blitz, May 6-13, Abidjan;

ii. Croatia GCT (Classical), June 24 - July 9, Zagreb;

iii. Paris Rapid & Blitz, July 26 - August 2, Paris;

iv. St Louis Rapid & Blitz, August 8-15, St. Louis;

v. Sinquefield Cup (Classical), August 16-30, St. Louis;

vi. Superbet Rapid & Blitz, November 4-11, Bucharest;

vii. Tata Steel India Rapid & Blitz, November 20-27, Kolkata;

viii. London Chess Classic (GCT Finals), November 30 - December 10, London.

Wesley So pictured on a recent tour of South Africa, where he gave a number of simuls and was the guest of honour at the South African Junior Chess Championships, which attracted a whopping 2,300 young players to Boksburg, just east of Johannesburg and south of Benoni.

Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 21-23)

1) Paehtz-White
1 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 2 ♕xa4+ ♗c6 1-0

2) Burnett-Carpenter
1 ♗h7+! ♔h8 2 ♘g6+ 1-0 It's going to be mate with 2...♔xh7 3 ♘f8+ ♔g8 4 ♕h7#.

3) Hymer-Bramson
1 ♖xf5! exf5 (or 1...♗xg5 2 ♖xg5 f6 3 ♕h6! and wins, as shown by 3...fxg5 4 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 5 ♘g6+ hxg6 6 ♕h3+ ♔g8 7 ♘xd5) **2 ♗xe7** (2 ♘xf7! would have been even more clinical) **2...♘xe7** (2...♕xe7 3 ♕xe7 ♘xe7 4 ♘xd7 ♖fe8 5 ♘e5 is also quite lost for Black) **3 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 4 ♖xe7 ♘b6 5 ♗xf7+ 1-0**

4) Kjartansson-Bergsson
1 ♘xe5! 1-0 Black gave up in view of 1...♕d8 2 ♘xf6+ gxf6 3 ♗xe6+ ♔g7 4 ♕h5 and 1...dxe5 2 ♘xf6+ gxf6 3 ♕xd7.

5) Adams-Williams
1 ♕xf8+! 1-0 1...♕xf8 2 ♘de6+ ♗xe6 3 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 4 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 leaves White a rook up. 1 ♘de6+! (or 1 ♘fe6+!) 1...♗xe6 2 ♘xe6+ ♕xe6 3 ♖xd5+ also does the business.

6) McKenna-Leanse
1...♗d5! (1...♕d5 is less pretty, but also wins, and if 2 g4 ♕d6+ or 2 ♕f3 f5 3 ♖e3 ♕xf3 4 ♖xf3 ♗d5) **2 ♖xd4** (2 ♗d3 f5! is quite fatal too) **2...♖h1# 0-1**

7) Bennett-Dobson
1...♖xg3+! 2 hxg3 (or if 2 ♔h1 ♖g4 and 3...♗xf4) **2...♕xg3+ 3 ♔h1 ♕h3+ 4 ♔g1 ♗xf4!** (the star move, freeing the dormant rook for action) **5 ♖xf4 ♖g8+ 6 ♔f2 ♖g2+ 7 ♔f1 ♕h1# 0-1**

8) Higgie-Baxter
1 ♗g4! (to win White must keep an eye on d7; instead, the game saw a cruel role reversal: 1 ♗e4? ♕c7 2 ♔f3 ♘d7 3 ♖f7? ♘e5+ 0-1) **1...♕c7 2 ♔f3 ♕c6+ 3 ♔f2 ♕c5+ 4 ♔f1** and with Black out of checks, ♖f8+ will net White a piece.

9) Gonda-Ashton
1 ♘xf5! exf5 (1...♗f8 2 ♖g1 followed by ♕g4 is no less crushing) **2 e6+ ♔g8 3 ♖g1+ ♔f8 4 ♗g7+ 1-0** 4...♔e8 5 ♕h5# follows or 4...♔g8 5 ♗h6+ ♔h8 6 ♕e5+.

10) Kasparov & Chapman-Sadler & Hassabis
1 ♘xh6+! (1 ♖xh6? ♘f6 defends, and if 2 ♕h4? ♕b7+ 3 ♔g1 gxh6) **1...gxh6 2 ♖g6+ ♔h8 3 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 4 ♖g6+ 1-0** The black queen is lost in view of 4...♔h8 5 ♕h4+ ♕h7 6 ♖h6.

11) Pollard-Anderson
White has a few ways to win, including the simple 1 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 2 ♔xg3. The trick was, however, to avoid the tempting **1 ♖xh7+? ♕xh7 2 ♖h1** due to 2**...♕xh1+!** (or even 2...♖f2+ 3 ♔xg3 ♖f3+! 4 ♔g2 ♕xh1+! 5 ♔xh1 ♖f1+ 6 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 7 ♔xg1 ♘f3+ and 8...♘xg5) **3 ♔xh1 ♖f1+ 4 ♔g2 ♖g1+! 5 ♔h3 ♖h1+**, which was agreed drawn in the game in view of 6 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 7 ♔xg1 ♘f3+ 8 ♔g2 ♘xg5.

12) Jayawarna-Bak
1 ♕xc2! (even more clinical than 1 ♖xb4 when 1...♘xb4 2 ♕d4 f6 3 ♘xb4 leaves White with a decisive initiative) **1...♘xc2 2 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 3 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 4 f6** (the point of White's play; Black can only escape the mating net at the cost of his queen) **4...♕b6+ 5 ♔h2 ♕e3 6 ♗g7# 1-0**

13) Coathup-Duggan
A tragicomedy occurred in the game: **1...♖xa6? 2 c7 ♖a8 3 ♖c6 ♖c8 4 ♔g3 ♔d5 5 ♖c2 ♔e4** (5...♔d6 6 ♔xg4 ♖xc7 7 ♖xc7 ♔xc7 8 ♔f5 is trivial too) **6 ♔xg4 ♖g8+ 7 ♔h5 ♖c8 8 ♔g6 ♔d3 9 ♖c6 ♔e4 10 ♔f6 1-0** Instead, 1...♔xf6! 2 c7 ♖h5+ 3 ♔g3 ♖h8 4 ♔xg4 ♔e6 5 ♔f4 ♔d6 would have won, as would 1...g3+! 2 ♔xg3 ♔xf6 3 c7 ♖g5+ 4 ♔f4 ♖g8 when the g-pawn is again too slow to save White, as shown by 5 g4 ♔e6 6 g5 ♔d6 7 ♔f5 ♔xc7 8 ♔f6 ♔d7 9 g6 ♖f8+!, and if 10 ♔g7 ♔e7 11 ♔h7 ♔f6 12 a7 ♖a8 13 g7 ♔f7!.

14) Weaving-Bates
Black's more active king proved decisive in the game: **1 ♖f6? f3 2 ♔e1 f2+ 3 ♔d1 ♖xa5 4 g6 ♖a7 5 ♖f5** (if 5 ♔e2 ♖e7+) **5...♔g2 6 ♖g5+ ♔f3 7 ♖f5+ ♔e3 8 ♖f8 f1♕+! 9 ♖xf1 ♖a1+ 0-1** Instead, 1 ♖e6! ♖a1+ 2 ♖e1 or 1 g6! would have drawn, and if here 1...♖a1+ 2 ♔e2 f3+ 3 ♔e3 f2? 4 g7 or 1...f3 2 ♖e6! ♖h2 3 ♔e1! f2+ 4 ♔e2 ♖h1 5 ♖f6 ♖e1+ 6 ♔d2.

15) Amonatov-Sarana
1 ♘d7! ♗xh2 (this won't help, but if 1...♖fd8 2 ♘f6+ ♔h8 3 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 4 ♖g1+ ♔h8 5 ♕f5 or 1...♕xd7 2 ♖xg7+! ♔h8 3 ♕f6 ♗e7 4 ♖g8+! ♔xg8 5 ♖g1+) **2 ♘f6+ ♔h8 3 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 4 ♕g4+! ♔h6** (it's mate in any case, as shown too by 4...♔xf6 5 ♖f1+ ♗f4 6 ♖xf4#) **5 ♕h5+ ♔g7 6 ♕g5+ ♔h8 7 ♕h6 1-0**

16) Daskalov-Galyas
1...d2+! (1...♗a6 2 ♔d1 d2! 3 ♗xd2+ ♔d3 also does the trick and reveals why White earlier had to place his king on d2 and keep Black's out of c3) **2 ♗xd2+ ♔d3 3 ♗g5 e3 4 ♔f1 ♔e4** (material is level, but the connected passed pawns prove decisive) **5 ♔g2 f4 6 ♗h4 f3+ 7 ♔f1 ♗a6+ 8 ♔g1 ♔d3 9 c8♕ ♗xc8 10 ♔f1 ♔d2 11 ♗e1+ ♔d1 12 ♗f2 ♗a6+ 13 ♔g1 ♔e2 0-1**

17) Willson-Chapman
1...♖xg2! 2 ♔xg2 (2 ♘e7+ ♔g7 3 ♘xc6 is also hopeless, in view of 3...♖aa2 4 ♘xe5 ♖xh2+ 5 ♔g1 ♖ag2+ 6 ♔f1 ♖f2+ 7 ♔e1 ♖e2+ 8 ♔f1 ♖h1#) **2...♖a2+ 3 ♔f1 ♗d7!** (the key move; as pointed out by the winner, 3...♘f3? 4 ♘b4 ♖xh2 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 ♖b8+ ♔g7 7 ♗e3 ♗xg3 8 ♖cb1 wouldn't be so clear-cut) **4 ♗e3 ♘f3 5 ♘e7+ ♔h7 6 ♘f5** (desperation, if the only way to try and escape the mating net) **6...♘xh2+ 7 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 8 ♔f1 ♘h2+ 9 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 10 ♔f1 gxf5 11 c6 bxc6 12 ♗f2 ♘d2+ 13 ♔g2 ♘xb1 0-1**

18) Simpson-Forster
Play concluded: **1...♕e8? 2 ♖xb7?** (2 ♗xf6 is a simple win) **2...♖d8?** (both players overlooked 2...♕c6 3 ♖d7 ♔e8!) **3 ♗xf6 gxf6 4 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 5 ♕g7# 1-0** Instead, 1...♗c8! was the only defence: 2 ♖d8+ (2 ♗xf6? ♗xd7 3 ♕g6 ♖g8! wins for Black) 2...♔e7 3 ♗xf6+ gxf6 4 ♘d5+ ♔xd8 5 ♕xf6+ ♔d7 6 ♕e7+ (this looks scary, but White has no more than perpetual check) 6...♔c6 7 ♘b4+ ♔b6, and if 8 ♘d5+ ♔c6 9 ♘b4+ or 8 ♕f6+ ♔b7 9 ♕c6+ ♔a7 10 ♘d5! ♕b7 11 ♕c5+ ♔b8 12 ♕d6+, etc.

19) Zanan-Mikhalevski
1...a5! (1...♖a1? 2 c6 ♖c1 3 ♔d6 ♔g4 4 c7 ♔g3 5 ♔d7 wins) **2 bxa5** (the main concept is 2 b5 ♖b4! when White cannot exchange rooks and 3 ♖h2 ♔g4 4 b6 ♔g3 5 ♖a2 h2 6 ♖a1 a4 is fine for Black, as shown by Victor Mikhalevski's line 7 ♔c6 ♔g2 8 b7 h1♕ 9 ♖xh1 ♔xh1 10 ♔c7 a3 11 b8♕ ♖xb8 12 ♔xb8 a2 13 c6 a1♕ 14 c7) **2...♖xa5 3 ♔d6 ♔g4 4 c6 ♖a6 5 ♔d7 ½-½** 5...♔g3 6 c7 ♖a7 7 ♔d8 ♖xc7 8 ♔xc7 h2 is an obvious draw.

20) Svidler-Andreikin
1...♕xh2+!! (even stronger than the also decisive 1...g3 2 hxg3 ♖xg3+! 3 ♔f1 ♖g2 4 ♕e5 ♕c6) **2 ♔xh2 ♖xh4+ 3 ♔g3 ♖h3+ 4 ♔f4 ♖f3+ 5 ♔e5 ♖g6 0-1** Mate follows on e6.

21) Kovchan-Korobov
1 ♘xd5!! exd5 (1...♘xd5 2 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 3 ♖xg7+ results in mate and 1...♗xe5 2 ♘xe7 ♗xf4+ 3 ♔h1 ♖xe7 4 ♖c2 is a decisive material advantage) **2 ♕xh6+! 1-0** The pretty finish could have been 2...gxh6 (or 2...♔g8 3 ♖xg7+! ♖xg7 4 ♗e6+!) 3 ♖g8+ ♔h7 4 ♗f5#.

22) Caruana-Nakamura
1 g5! (instead, 1 ♕c1? ♘bd3 2 ♕d2?! ♘f4+ 3 ♔g1 ♔f7 saw Nakamura having taken over in the game) **1...fxg5** (there's simply no defence, as shown too by 1...♘bd3 2 gxf6 ♖xf6 3 ♕h8+ ♔f7 4 ♖h7 and 1...♕d8 2 ♘f5 ♗xf5 3 exf5) **2 ♘f5! gxf5** (or 2...♗xf5 3 exf5 ♖xf5 4 ♕h8+ ♔f7 5 ♖h7 ♖xh7 6 ♖xh7#) **3 ♕xd6! ♔f7 4 ♖h8 ♖xh8 5 ♖xh8** and the threat of ♗h5+ proves fatal.

23) Jones-Fernandez

White completed an impressive save with **1...♖c8? 2 ♖xd2 ♖h8 3 ♖d7 ♔f5 4 ♔g3 a4 5 ♖f7+ ♔e5** (or 5...♔g6 6 ♖a7 ♖xh7 7 ♖xa4 ♔f5 8 ♖xg4) **6 ♔xg4 a3 7 ♖a7 a2 ½-½** He also draws after 1...♖c7? 2 ♖d4+! ♔xd4 3 h8♕+ ♔d3 4 ♕d8+ ♔e2 5 ♕d4! d1♕ 6 ♕e4+ ♔d2 7 ♕d4+ ♔c2 8 ♕a4+ ♔c1 9 ♕a1+, as pointed out by Justin Tan in his ChessPublishing column. However, 1...♖c2! would have won, and if 2 ♔g1 (or 2 ♔g3 ♖c3+ 3 ♔xg4 ♖d3 4 ♖xd3 ♔xd3 5 h8♕ d1♕+ with two extra pawns and a winning queen endgame) 2...♖c7!, as now 3 ♖d4+ ♔xd4 4 h8♕+ ♔d3 5 ♕d8+ ♔e2 sees Black queen with check.

24) Erdos-Rendle

1...f3!! (a study-like defence, which sees Black clear the c1-h6 diagonal for his bishop; instead, 1...♔g8 2 ♗b3+ saw White's connected passed pawns prove decisive in the game: 2...♔f8 – 2...♔h8 3 ♔f7 ♗b6 4 h5 ♗d4 5 h6! is the other key line when there's no ...♗e3 – 3 ♔h7 f3 4 g6 ♗f6 5 h5 f2 6 ♗c4 1-0) **2 ♗xf3** (2 ♔h7 f2 3 ♗e2 ♗f6!? forces White to find 4 g6! a4 5 h5 a3 6 h6 a2 7 g7+ ♔e7 8 g8♕ a1♕ to draw) **2...♔g8 3 ♗d5+ ♔h8 4 ♔f7 ♗b6 5 h5** (5 ♗c6 ♗f2 6 ♗a4 is a little trick, but 6...♗g3 7 h5 ♗f4 8 g6 ♗h6 an easy draw) **5...♗d4 6 h6** (or 6 g6 ♗g7 7 ♔e6 a4 8 ♔f5 when a useful resource to know is 8...a3 9 ♔g5 ♗c3 10 h6 a2! 11 ♗xa2 ♗d2+ 12 ♔h5 ♗xh6! and it's stalemate if 13 ♔xh6) **6...♗e3** halts the pawns just in time, since **7 ♔f6 ♗xg5+ 8 ♔xg5** would leave White with the wrong-coloured rook's pawn for his bishop.

Batsford Competition

In our December issue we published the following position:

M.Carlsen-V.Ivanchuk
Foros 2008

White to Play

The challenge was to find the move that world champion Magnus Carlsen played, while explaining the reasoning behind it. With thanks to Batsford, three readers who will receive a copy of both Thomas Engqvist's *300 Most Important Chess Positions* and the new edition of Paul Keres's *Practical Chess Endings* are James Ayres (Redhill), Bernard De Bruycken (Ghent) and Mike Read (Norwich). All three found the key idea of ♖a1 with the idea of switching the rook to a2.

Let's now hand over to Thomas Engqvist to present the solution:

28 ♖a1!

Carlsen believes the rook belongs on a2 where it can prepare a4-a5 and manoeuvre to c2 in some lines. This last mentioned idea, to get out of the firing line of the bishop on the h6-c1 diagonal, stems from a game Petrosian-Gufeld, played in the 1960 Soviet Championship. In that game Petrosian kept clear of the opponent's dark-squared bishop by playing the moves a2-a4, b2-b3, ♖a1-a2-c2, ♖f1-b1-b2. Notice that by playing on the second rank with the rooks, the last rank is 'removed' and so the board is reduced to seven ranks instead of eight. It's because of such model examples that Carlsen, with his extraordinary memory, can make use of the most important classical ideas from the past.

The game continued:

28...♕h6 29 ♖a2 ♘f6?!

Ivanchuk didn't realise the danger of the c-file because it's important to block it with a timely ...♘c5.

30 ♔g2 ♘h5?!

30...♘d7 is better.

31 ♘d5! ♘xd5 32 ♗xd5 ♗f4 33 ♕f2 fxe4 34 ♗xe4 ♕g5 35 ♖c2!

35...d5?

35..♖f7 was the best, but White has the incredible beautiful bishop manoeuvre 36 ♗b7!! with the idea of ♗c8. Note that White exploits the fact that Black has reduced the board to seven ranks. **36 ♗xd5 ♗xg3 37 hxg3 ♘f4+ 38 ♔f1 ♘xd5 39 ♖ce2! ♕f6**

39...♖f5 is answered by 40 g4 or 39...♖e8 by 40 f4.

40 ♖xe5 ♕xf3 41 ♕xf3 ♖xf3+ 42 ♔e2 ♖f5 43 ♖xf5 gxf5 44 ♔d3 c5 45 ♖e5 ♘b4+ 46 ♔d2 1-0

This Month's New Releases

Opening Repertoire: The Sicilian Najdorf
John Doknjas & Joshua Doknjas,
352 pages, Everyman Chess
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

It is very unusual to encounter a chess book written by a pair of brothers. FM John and IM Joshua have enjoyed a lot of success in Canada and "Have been playing the Najdorf for over eight years; they have analysed and discussed cutting-edge developments, which are shared in this book."

In his introduction, Grandmaster Sutovsky calls this "A book that will be useful for both club players and grandmasters." It is clear that to play the Najdorf successfully is not an easy task. It is definitely not the sort of opening that can be employed with just a basic knowledge of the theory. It is no accident that Fischer and Kasparov – two of the hardest-working players of all – used the Najdorf extensively. Their work ethic kept them on top of developments and ahead of the game, but club players, with limited study time, have very little chance of keeping up to date with the theory of the main lines. Therefore, a good book on the Najdorf must instruct, but not bombard.

Learning copious amounts of long variations is not an option for most players, yet any lines advocated in a book must be sound and not prone to being overturned by the next game in an elite tournament. The authors are aware of this: "Our book is conscious of providing practical lines that are understandable, as opposed to a labyrinth of variations that require extreme memorization. At the same time, we ensure that Black's position is theoretically sound and contains good opportunities to play for the win." They split the material into three main sections: Sharp Lines, Quieter Systems, and New Developments.

Any would-be Najdorf converts simply must have something serious in mind when facing 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5. The problem is that the Poisoned Pawn variation (6...e6 7 f4 ♕b6) is still the best, from a theoretical point of view, but not from the position of a practical student. This book opts for 6....♘bd7, when "the theoretical workload is much less demanding." Three features of the knight move are the rapid development of the queenside, more protection for e5, and a delay in the decision of where to place the f8-bishop. White's main tries are now 7 ♕e2, 7 f4 and 7 ♗c4.

6...♘bd7 has long been considered an old-fashioned approach and somewhat discredited by history. Readers of a certain age may recall Spassky winning a particularly good game in his second title match with Petrosian (Game 19, 1969). The difference now is that after 7 ♗c4 Black is advised to play 7...♕b6 rather than the older 7...♕a5. This has more bite and leaves White wondering whether or not to let go of the b2-pawn, with one point being that compared to the standard Poisoned Pawn lines, ♗xf6 isn't going to cripple the kingside, because the d7-knight can recapture.

It is still not always easy to avoid a transposition back to the main lines and nimble footwork is required at various junctures, such as this one: **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7 7 f4 ♕c7 8 ♕f3 b5 9 0-0-0 ♗b7 10 ♗d3**.

Now in Antipov-Ragger, European Championship, Gjakova 2016, Black played 10 ...g6!?, which definitely avoids heading back to the theoretical highways with 10...e6. The game ended in a fighting draw.

Against 6 ♗e2 the authors recommend Fischer's favourite, 6...e5, and this is typical of the 'straight bat' Najdorf approach of the book. It does, however, leave the "Model Najdorf Game" of the introduction, in which Kasparov meets Adams' 6 ♗e3 with 6...e6, transposing to his favourite Scheveningen, looking an odd choice with which to open the book. Sometimes the authors do indeed steer away from 6...e5, such as against the Sozin, when 6 ♗c4 is met by 6...e6, and 6 a4, which is met by 6...g6, "since this is an opportunity for Black to play the formidable Dragon structure without having to worry about White castling long (since his pawn on a4 will give Black too much play against the king)."

This is a decent book and a good attempt to offer something fresh on the ever-popular Najdorf. The prose explanations work well and the illustrative games include several examples from 2017-8, which means the lines should be up to date and fully serviceable for club and tournament players.

Sean Marsh

The Grandmaster: Magnus Carlsen and the Match that made Chess Great Again
Brin-Jonathan Butler, 212 pages
Simon & Schuster
RRP £12.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £11.69**

New York, 2016. Trump has been the President-elect for two days. But it is not just politics that is drawing the world's attention to the Big Apple. The chess world is also in town.

Carlsen-Karjakin gets underway, following an opening ceremony at a hotel Trump had once owned, before it went bankrupt. Brin-Jonathan Butler was there to follow the action. His brief threefold: to explore why (in his view) Carlsen was not a household name, to understand the secret of his greatness, and to consider how long Carlsen could stay at the top without going mad. Butler treads some rich, if familiar ground, along the way: Fischer, women in chess, computers, chess and sanity, the Marshall Club, prodigies, hustling and hustlers.

Butler is at his best when writing about the match itself. His description of Carlsen's defeat in game eight is extremely well done. Perhaps this is the moment where he forges his closest connection with the world champion. As Karjakin bears down on Carlsen, Butler writes: "His defeat was inevitable and I've never seen a lonelier looking human being [...] trying to decide in what order to abandon his identity and his life." In the desperate attempt to stave off the inevitable, Butler captures the essence of what it means for all of us, even the brilliant like Carlsen, to be mortal. "As his time wore dangerously down, it was obvious, just this once, that his inability to let go of a defeated battlefield wasn't what made him a unique genius. Instead it laid bare the fragility and vulnerability of his universal humanity that tied all of us watching to him."

Butler gives some interesting insights into Fischer from conversations with those who knew him. "Don't ever ask me about losing" was apparently Fischer's reply when once asked about the subject. Butler's story of his own chess is a little less convincing. How many players would really lose the first game they ever played via Fool's mate? The story felt a little pat, Scholar's mate more plausible. The passage on Butler as a bullet chess player in cafes also lacks a certain something. However, whatever minor quibbles I have with Butler as a chessplayer, his authenticity and talent as a writer are not in doubt. His childhood experiences of playing chess in Hungary with drunken relatives are both hilarious and terrifying.

The main problem Butler faces, which does impact on the book, is that he simply cannot get any direct access to Carlsen, Karjakin or their respective camps. This is the speculative portrait of an outsider looking in. Perhaps for this reason he never fully answers the question he poses. His ultimate conclusions, while interesting (and I won't spoil by sharing here), are not necessarily fully wedded to the narrative that precedes them. Yet this may be something we have to put on chess's charge sheet rather than Butler's. As he highlights, this is a game where no more than 30 or so people can make a full-time living just from playing. Perhaps it is incumbent on all those in a position to do so, to be more open, to make a greater effort to let the world in.

Butler does not really give any context as to why this was the match that made chess great again. Beyond speculation that Fischer would have been a Trump supporter, there is also little on the sociological context of chess, in a rapidly changing world. That said, this is an important book. The stories of our world champions and their matches will be told for as long as chess is played. Butler makes an important contribution to the canon of chess writing and his book is worth reading.

Ben Graff

The Longest Game:
The Five Karpov-Kasparov Matches
Jan Timman, 368 Pages
New in Chess
RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

World championship matches aren't what they used to be. 12 games are simply not enough and a match lasting less than one month must be seen as lightweight when compared to former times. 24 was the norm for many years, but even that number pales in comparison to the first Karpov-Kasparov match: 48 games and still no result. This would explain the title of Timman's new book on its own, but the unfinished business stretched to an unprecedented five matches and 144 games. All the way from Moscow to Lyon, from 1984 to 1990, Karpov and Kasparov were locked in a seemingly perpetual battle for the chess crown.

Kasparov was eventually triumphant, but it was never an easy ride for him. Why the renewed interest in a contest that reached its conclusion in 1990? Timman was given the idea to write this book by New in Chess

supremo Allard Hoogland, who wanted to read about the "money, madness, brilliancies and blunders", in addition to the stories of the best games from the matches.

There are 50 games with excellent annotations and an additional 17 game fragments. The annotations are deeper than those found in the books released shortly after each match, but lighter than those in Kasparov's own books, which is a good thing. As the author puts it, "In his analyses, Kasparov often loses his way in a forest of variations. A slightly lighter form of annotations might make the games more accessible." Timman is right. I don't know anyone who ever plays through the long, branching thickets of deep analysis to be found in some chess books. Timman's notes – thankfully – rely heavily on prose explanations instead of endless variations, thus making them very accessible to club and tournament players.

Timman knows both players very well and has played against them more times than most. Therefore he is ideally placed to give serious insights into the characters of Karpov and Kasparov. He notes the level of Karpov's preparation, which at various moments outshone that of Kasparov's camp, despite history judging the latter as the most prepared of all players. The quality of Karpov's seconds had a lot to do with this. "No chess player has ever had such prominent seconds as Karpov did: Geller, Polugaevsky, Tal, and now Portisch; one World Champion and three top grandmasters, each one of whom had gone far in the World Championship cycle himself."

Karpov's excellent preparation fuelled Kasparov's paranoia and he burned significant time and energy on the potential issue of a mole in his camp. Vladimirov was ejected from it towards the end of the third match as Kasparov sought to understand how he could lose three consecutive games, this allowing Karpov to level the scores in unlikely fashion.

One story from the time of the London leg of the 1986 match serves as a reminder of the tight leash held by certain authorities. "That night, we attended the musical *Chess* in the Prince Edward Theatre together with Karpov. The Soviet authorities had forbidden other members of Karpov's delegation to visit the musical, since it was supposed to contain anti-Soviet elements."

Fischer famously said all the games were fixed; not just the results but "every move of every game." He said he would write a book to expand on his theory, but of course it never appeared. As much as we choose to reject Fischer's theories on a whole range of other subjects, his thoughts on chess usually command more respect. It is very difficult to see how the games could be fixed to such an extent and certainly any conspiracy theory must take into account the circus of the abandoned first match. Why draw attention to something with such an unusual aspect?

Normally the matter would close, to be filed under Fischer's bitterness. Yet Spassky enters the story too. This was all before he was reunited with Fischer in 1992, which makes the observations more interesting.

A.Karpov-G.Kasparov
World Championship (Game 19), Lyons 1990

Kasparov played **38...♖c1** and "offered a draw, which Karpov accepted without hesitation." Spassky exclaimed "Scandal! The result has been agreed by the players!" He then wanted nothing more to do with the match and explained: "The logic is very simple. If you decided to make a draw at move 39, it means you are afraid to adjourn the game and analyse. Because the analysis might show that you have a simply winning position. If you have a simply winning position you must win and that means that you are to break the agreement, if you agreed that this game would be drawn." Timman doesn't believe the conspiracy theories (but others do, including Hort), yet covers them, to add even more colour to the remarkable story.

This book is one of the must-buys of 2019, for sure. It can be enjoyed on several different levels: the games are brought back to life due to Timman's new analysis and highly pertinent observations; the personal stories will be new to most readers; the background to each match is never less than fascinating, instructive and entertaining.

Timman's Titans, the Dutch Grandmaster's previous book on world champions, won the coveted ECF Book of the Year award in 2017. *The Longest Game* is another work of exceptional quality and must already represent a very serious candidate for 2019's award.

Sean Marsh

Game Changer
Matthew Sadler & Natasha Regan,
416 pages, paperback
RRP £19.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.95**

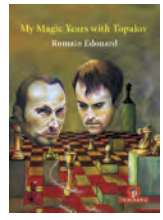
The story of how *AlphaZero* taught itself chess and within just a few hours was the strongest chess player in the world. Sadler and Regan not only explain all about Demis Hassabis, DeepMind and AI, but by examining 2,000 of *AlphaZero*'s games are able to present a number of important lessons which we might all learn from it. There are chapters on such topics as Attacking the king: the march of the rook's pawn and *AlphaZero*'s opening repertoire. For more on this book, do see pages 32-33 of this issue.

Learn from Michal Krasenkow
Michal Krasenkow, 408 pages, paperback
RRP £29.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.99**

In this new work for Thinkers Publishing, leading Polish Grandmaster Michal Krasenkow presents many highlights from his long career. Krasenkow was born in Moscow in 1963, later becoming Georgian Champion ahead of emigrating to Poland in 1992. He has played in a great number of successful teams over the years, as quickly becomes clear from a look at this collection of well annotated games. Krasenkow groups his best and most instructive games via themes, so there are chapters on defence and dynamic play, as well as attacking chess, while the book closes with a great number of fascinating endgames.

Man vs Machine:
Challenging Human Supremacy at Chess
Karsten Müller & Jonathan Schaeffer,
480 pages, paperback
RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

The man versus machine battle in chess is, of course, an important one for the history of technology. It's only 13 years ago that Vladimir Kramnik sensationally overlooked that mate in two from *Deep Fritz*. Kramnik himself contributes a foreword to this story of how computers gradually became stronger and stronger at chess. Müller and Schaeffer, a Professor of Computer Science, do not, however, neglect the human side of the story, so the reader finds out plenty about the chess players as well as the computer programmers involved in the rise of the machine.



My Magic Years with Topalov
Romain Edouard, 312 pages, paperback
RRP £27.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.19**

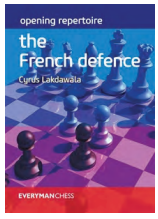
From 2010 until 2014 Romain Edouard worked for Veselin Topalov as a second, a period which saw Topalov win the FIDE Grand Prix of 2012-13. Edouard presents some of Topalov's best games from the period, as well as many of the 'magic' ideas which they came up with together. He is unafraid to explain in detail all about the duties of a second, while

offering plenty of useful insights into how he and Topalov studied openings and prepared for games.

Please note that if you'd prefer a hardback version of this new work from Thinkers Publishing, that too is available from Chess & Bridge for £31.99 (Subscribers – £28.79).

Oleg Pervakov's Industrial Strength Endgame Studies
Sergei Tkachenko, 248 pages, paperback
RRP £15.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £14.39**

Oleg Pervakov is widely recognised as Russia's greatest living chess composer. In this work for Elk & Ruby, Ukrainian solving expert Tkachenko presents 100 of Pervakov's greatest compositions, ranging from elegant and short to some quite complex and detailed positions. As such, unlike Pervakov's earlier books, this one is not pocket-sized, but will certainly supply a stern test of your endgame ability, if also a beautiful journey for the diligent reader.



Opening Repertoire: The French Defence
Cyrus Lakdawala, 368 pages, paperback
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

The French has long been one of the bedrocks of Lakdawala's repertoire and here he presents some of his favourite lines. With the exception of the Tarrasch, which is met by 3...c5 4 exd5 ♕xd5, the lines presented tend to be more strategic than forcing in nature, such as 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 ♕d7, while throughout Lakdawala is his usual lucid self and particularly strong on explaining the key motifs Black should remember.

Openings: Sicilian Defense
Jerzy Konikowski & Uwe Bekemann,
170 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Many club players are afraid of playing the Sicilian Defence; it involves learning a lot of theory and the resulting middlegames can appear rather irrational. Step forward Konikowski and Bekemann, who assume no prior knowledge of the Sicilian. Their focus is not just to present some basic theory in the many lines of the Sicilian, but especially to explain the key concepts and plans for both sides in each variation.

Also recently arrived at Chess & Bridge is *Openings: Open Games*, also by Konikowski and Bekemann. This does exactly the same as *Openings: Sicilian Defense*, except for teaching the basic ideas behind the many different openings after 1 e4 e5, while running to 160 pages and also retailing at £17.99, or £16.19 for Subscribers.

The Bombastic Bird's
Lawrence Trent, PC-DVD;
running time: 6 hours, 21 minutes
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Subtitled 'An energetic and exciting repertoire after 1.f4', the popular presenter certainly believes in the Bird's, which he is quick to demonstrate is fully sound. Trent maps out a comprehensive repertoire with 1 f4, beginning by revealing how to gain the advantage against such sidelines as 1...f5 and 1...g5. The From Gambit, 1...e5, receives plenty of coverage, with both there and in his coverage of the Reversed Leningrad, Trent presenting a surprising amount of theory and several significant new ideas for White.

The Chelyabinsk Meteorite: Selected Games of Igor Kurnosov
Elk & Ruby, 210 pages, paperback
RRP £15.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £14.39**

Russian publisher Elk & Ruby deserve credit for this tribute to the Russian Grandmaster Igor Kurnosov (1985-2013), who was tragically hit and killed by a car. Kurnosov's friends and opponents present a number of impressive games which clearly demonstrate his steady progression as a player. Kurnosov was especially noted for his analytical ability, attacking prowess and endgame skill. Contributors include Kurnosov's grandmaster colleagues Dmitry Bocharov, Ernesto Inarkiev and Kateryna Lagno.

The Indian Chessmaster: Malik Mir Sultan Khan
Ulrich Geilmann, 220 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Mir Sultan Khan remains a magical, almost mythical figure in British chess history. He famously arrived in England in 1929, dazzled the world with his victories over some of the best players of the day, and then returned to India in 1933, never to be seen at the chess board again. Geilmann does his best to shed light on Mir Sultan Khan's life and both those unfamiliar and familiar with Khan's amazing story during his chess years in England should find plenty of interest.

The Queen's Indian Defense: Main Line 4.g3 System
Maxim Chetverik, 420 pages, paperback
RRP £23.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.59**

Elk & Ruby continue to evolve as a chess publisher, moving from on historical works and those devoted to studies to now also covering the openings. Russian IM Chetverik is certainly something of an expert on the main line Queen's Indian, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3, having played over 100 games in it. He supplies the latest state of play in all the key variations as he presents some 181 illustrative games. While theoretical in places, Chetverik most certainly does not write without the club player in mind, making good use throughout of 'land-mines', transposition alerts and key tips.

World Chess Championship 2016: Sergey Karjakin vs. Magnus Carlsen
Jerzy Konikowski & Uwe Bekemann,
144 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Last month we listed *World Chess Championship 2018: Fabiano Caruana vs. Magnus Carlsen*. The same authors had earlier penned this account of Carlsen's previous match, which was, of course, another rather close encounter. The build-up of the tension can definitely be felt by the reader, who also gets to enjoy the fairly well annotated games.

Also make welcome recent appearances in English from German publisher Joachim Beyer Verlag are:

The French Defense: Properly Played by French legend Wolfgang Uhlmann (188 pages, RRP £17.99, Subscribers – £16.19);

The King's Indian Attack: Properly Played, Jerzy Konikowski and Robert Ullrich (300 pages, RRP £19.99, Subscribers – £17.99);

The London System: Properly Played, Marcus Schmucker (184 pages, RRP £17.99, Subscribers – £16.19);

The Sicilian Wing Gambit, Marcus Schmucker (136 pages, RRP £17.99, Subs' – £16.19);

Better Late Than Never: The Tennison Gambit, Uwe Bekemann (112 pages, RRP £17.99, Subscribers – £16.19);

Chess Phenomenon Paul Morphy, Otto Dietze (152 pages, RRP £17.99, Subscribers – £16.19);

Increase your Chess: Talent is Overrated, Patrick Karcher (188 pages, RRP £17.99, Subscribers – £16.19).

Saunders on Chess

Follow me on Twitter: @johnchess or email: johns@chess.co.uk

My initial inspiration for this month's column came from fellow columnist Carl Portman's comments last month (February 2019, page 30), about the clutter that accumulates at the side of the board at congresses these days. Carl is so right. It's a problem that has rankled with me for some time, particularly in my role as photographer. I have spent many an unhappy hour trying (and usually failing) to crop out bottles, bananas and chocolate bars from my shots.

There seems to be a rule whereby the quantity and size of the clutter is inversely proportional to the size of the player, with diminutive juniors often eclipsed in their entirety by an array of huge bottles resembling Barcelona's Sagrada Familia cathedral. Some eminent players even have sponsorship deals for their clutter. A Red Bull can (other brands are available) features in innumerable photos I have taken of Hikaru Nakamura. It's usually an empty can which he brings to his board. I am starting to wonder whether I could claim the legal right to a small share of his earnings when my photos are published far and wide.

I think the most extreme example of board-side clutter that I have seen was a chap at Hastings who was in the habit of placing a photo of his wife and pet dog at the side of his board as if it were his office desk. Compare and contrast with the old days, for example the well-known image from the *Illustrated London News* in 1873 depicting the first Oxford-Cambridge Match (a convenient place to view it being my own website's Varsity match page - www.saund.co.uk/britbase/varsitychess.html) and you will see that the bearded young gentlemen of the university teams have no more than a small cup of tea at their side, with the only other things on the table being the highly decorative lamps used to illuminate the moves. We modern-day photographers would give our eye teeth to take a picture of that scene.

Cynics among the readership will rightly point out that the 1873 image was not a photo, and that in reality, for all we know, the players had all manner of Victorian appurtenances at their elbow – snuff boxes, walking canes, notebooks, copies of *Strand Magazine*, Howard Staunton's latest best-seller, even bottles of beer (well, they were students, weren't they?) – which the artist has chosen to leave out. I must admit it did strike me as odd that there were no ashtrays in that image. In most old chess photos that is the only thing that accompanies the scoresheets at the side of the board – and the only thing that you don't see in 21st century equivalents.

Now for a confession: were the lady wife to read the foregoing paragraph (she has better things to do with her time), she would hoot with derision at the hypocrisy. "Seriously, are you lecturing the readership about clutter, with the state of your study being what it is?" she might say. It would be hard to deny. There's not room to swing Charlie the chess cat in my workroom with all the books, mags and camera kit, though, like all husbands charged with being untidy, I always defend myself with the specious claim that I "know where everything is". However, it was a recent discovery amongst my ~~pile of junk~~ archive which now enables me to move on to the second part of my diatribe, paradoxically leading to a suggestion to alleviate the clutter problem which Carl and I have described.

A few days ago I rediscovered a wooden chess set which a friend had given me some years ago when he had moved abroad. It was in a supermarket bag, but once I had purchased an inexpensive box and a small wooden board for it from those good people at Baker Street (see photo), it proved the ideal coffee table chess set. It is smaller than modern-day sets used for competitions, with a 3-inch king rather than the now standard 3½.

A few days previously I had seen a tweet posted by Douglas Griffin (@dgriffinchess – highly recommended) showing a photo of Hübner playing Petrosian at Wijk in 1971 on a similar-sized set, leaving plenty of space around it. It's a spare, simple black and white photo, with just the scoresheets and (unused) ashtray on the table beside the player. The low-key body language of the players helps to create an image of calmness and intellectual rigour. This is something that modern-day photographers struggle to replicate, with players stocked up for the long haul as if they were about to run a marathon. Which, in a sense, they are. Hübner and Petrosian knew they would get a break after five hours, whereas modern-day players feel the need to cater for a session which could stretch beyond seven hours.

I do wonder, though, whether the competition guidelines for board and set sizes might usefully be revisited. I find I prefer the smaller sized set, with the 3-inch king and a board with 1.5-inch or 1.75-inch squares for home use. Why is it axiomatic that sets used for competition need to be so big? Downsizing equipment might go some way to alleviating the cramped conditions prevalent at so many chess competitions, where the players barely have room to keep score. If it was good enough for Hübner and Petrosian, it should be good enough for the rest of us. Small is beautiful.

Note the book in the photo, another recent purchase from the Chess Shop: *Game Changer* by Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan. I wasn't surprised to learn from the shop staff that this one has been selling like hot cakes as it documents a major milestone in our understanding of chess. And if the revelations about the advent of artificial intelligence into chess aren't enough to tempt you, the names of the authors on the cover should make it doubly attractive. The sheer enthusiasm with which Matthew and Natasha write about chess is intoxicating as in their previous award-winning *Chess for Life*. I've run out of room to say more about it here other than: buy it and read it!

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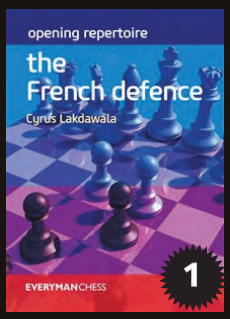

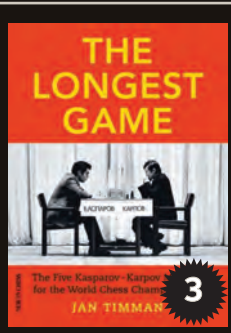

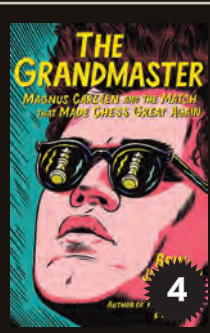

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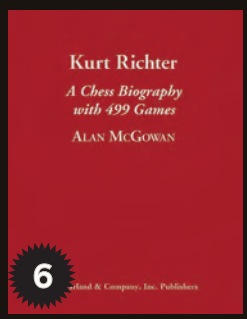

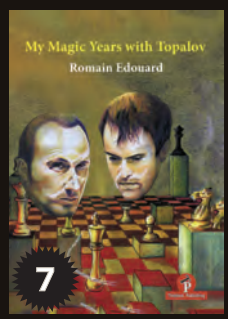

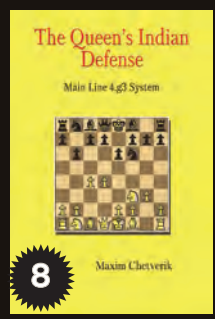

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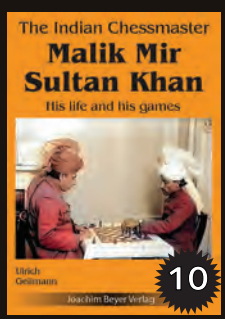

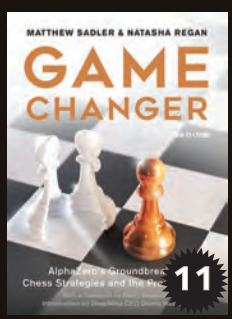

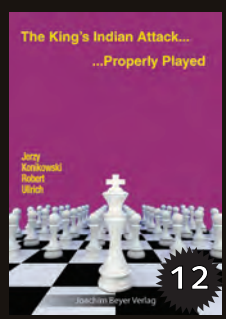

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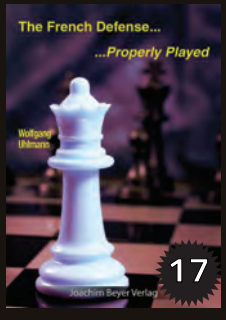

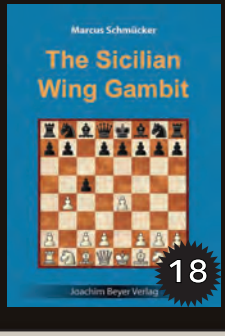

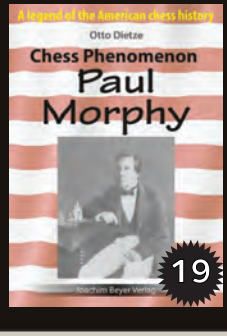

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